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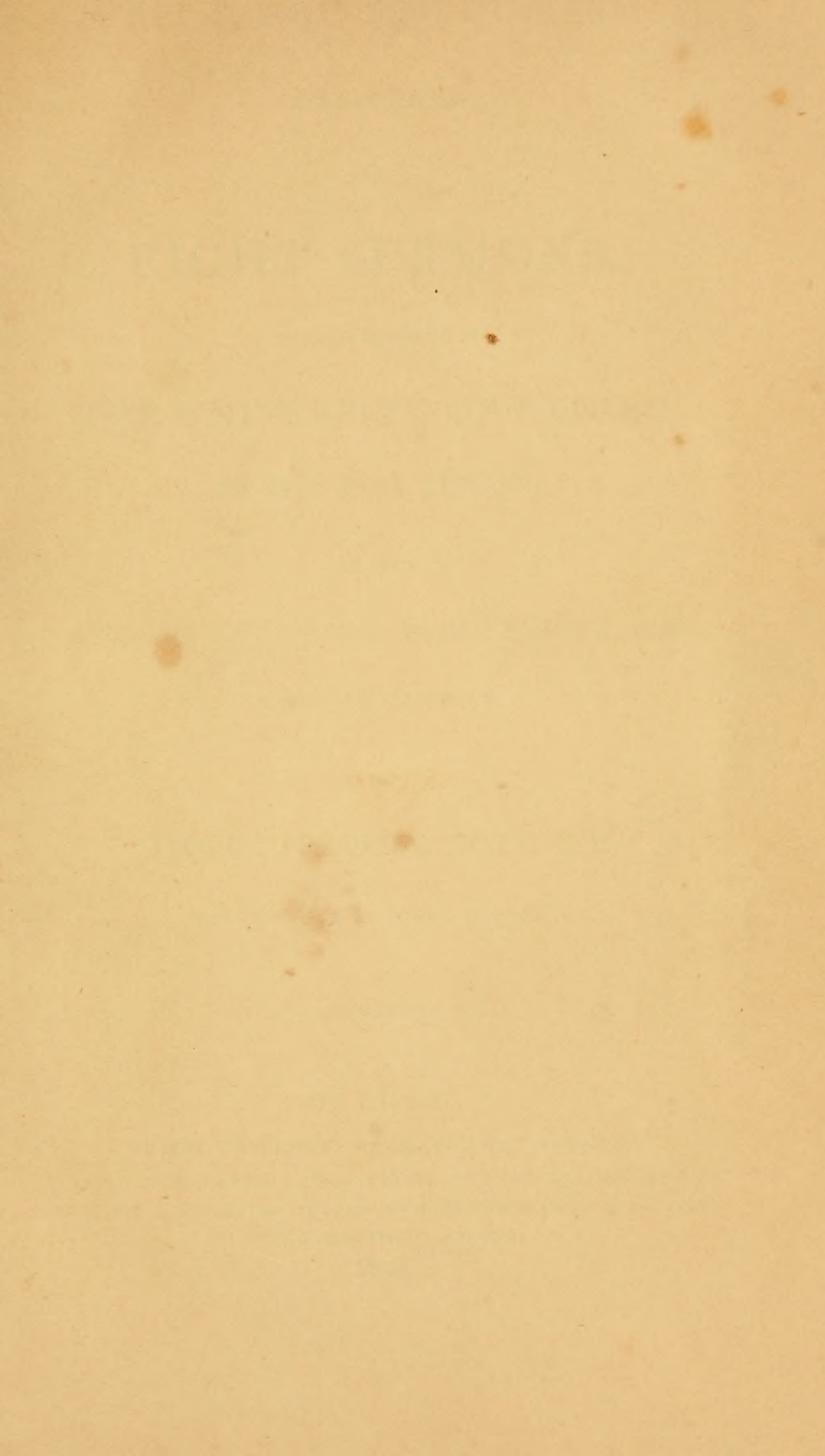
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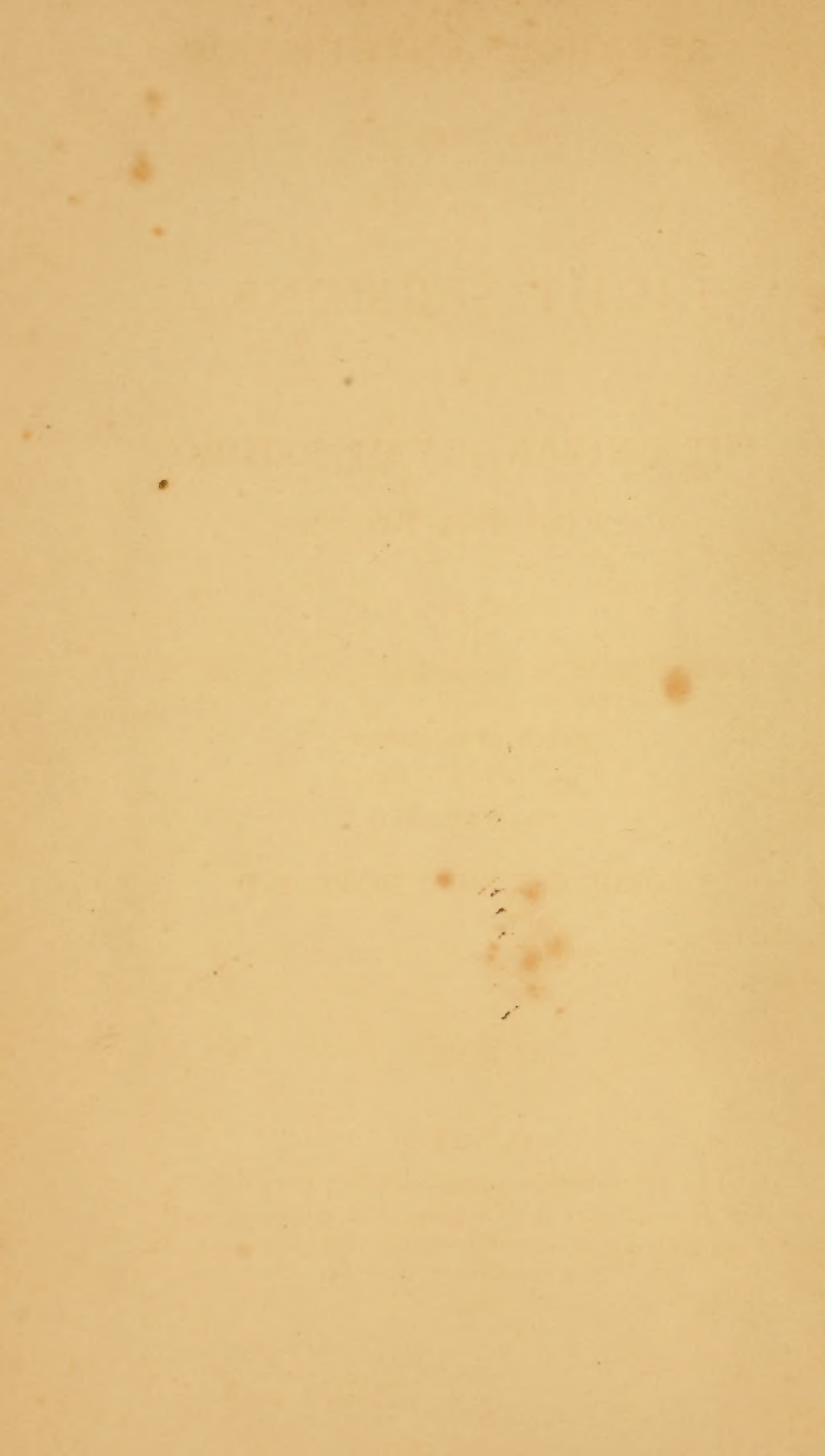
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Religious enthusiasm
considered







RELIGIOUS ENTHUSIASM

CONSIDERED ;

IN

EIGHT SERMONS,

PREACHED BEFORE

THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,

IN THE YEAR MDCCCII.

AT THE

LECTURE FOUNDED BY JOHN BAMPTON, A. M.

CANON OF SALISBURY.

BY

GEORGE FREDERIC NOTT, B. D.

FELLOW OF ALL SOULS' COLLEGE.

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1803.

RELIGIOUS LITERATURE

CONSIDERED

EIGHT SERMONS

TO THE

THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

IN A SERMON

AT THE

BY JOHN BAPTISTE

OF OXFORD

AT

WHICH WAS DELIVERED AT THE

GEORGE BISHOP NOTT AND

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ON THE 10TH OF JULY 1784

AND PUBLISHED BY

TO WHICH IS ADDED A

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SIR,

WHEN I received the permission to inscribe these Sermons to Your Majesty, I was not presumptuous enough to consider it as an honour conferred upon myself.

I received it only as a mark of Your Majesty's condescending regard

to the memory of my Grandfather, whom You had honoured by considering as one of Your oldest, and most faithful servants; and I saw in it an additional proof of that goodness, which uniformly leads Your Majesty to retain a gracious recollection of the dutiful attachment of your subjects.

I am well aware, SIR, that the Sermons which I now presume to lay at Your Majesty's feet have but little claim to Your notice and protection, from any merit which they may possess in themselves.

But when I recollect how zealously Your Majesty has at all times supported the Established Church, I am
en-

encouraged humbly to hope, that
You will view them with indulgence
as a feeble, but a sincere effort, in
defence of the Unity of that Church.

I am,

SIR,

Your Majesty's

most devoted

and most dutiful

Subject and Servant,

GEORGE FREDERIC NOTT.

PRINCETON
THEOLOGICAL
LIBRARY
PREFACE.

IN offering these Sermons to the Public, I am solicitous to make one previous observation, that thus my object, as far as respects a very material part of them, may be clearly understood.

The opinions which are here advanced concerning Mr. Wesley's and Mr. Whitefield's pretensions, are such as have been formed upon a minute and a dispassionate examination both of their lives, and of their writings. Nevertheless, for fear of any misapprehension, I have stated the facts themselves upon which these opinions rest. They will be found in the notes which are subjoined to each Sermon; and they are given as much at length as the nature of this work will allow. The Reader therefore may decide for

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himself:

himself: and accordingly as it shall appear to him that the conclusions which have been drawn are warranted by the facts adduced, he will adopt, or reject them.

Respecting the notes, I could wish to observe, that they might easily have been made more copious: for the proofs which support the several positions that have been advanced, are very numerous. But it was my object not to divert the attention of the Reader from the main thread of the discourse, any more than was absolutely necessary. Should he still wish for additional evidence, his mind will be abundantly satisfied by referring to the following works, from which principally the facts here detailed have been selected.

Memoirs of the late Rev. J. Wesley, by J. Hampson, A. B.

The Life of the Rev. J. Wesley, by Dr. Coke and Mr. Moore.

——— with the Life of the Rev. C. Wesley, by John Whitehead, M. D.

Original Letters by the Rev. J. Wesley, &c. illustrative of his Early History, published by J. Priestley, LL. D.

Mr. Wesley's Journals.

——— Appeals to Men of Reason and Religion,
Parts i. ii. iii.

Memoirs of the Life of the Rev. George Whitefield,
M. A. by the Rev. J. Gillies, D. D.

A Short Account of God's Dealings with the Rev. G.
Whitefield, A. B. written by himself.

Further Account of the same.

Mr. Whitefield's Letters; see his Works, vol. 1, 2, 3.

——— Controversial Pieces. Works, vol. 4.

——— Journals.

A Brief History of the Principles of Methodism, by
Josiah Tucker, A. M.

The Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists compared,
by ——— Lavington, D. D. Bishop of Exeter.

And now having stated both my sentiments respecting the nature of Mr. Wesley's and Mr. Whitefield's pretensions; and the authorities by which those sentiments may be supported; I will venture to express an hope, that these Sermons may contribute, in some degree, towards the repressing of that restless spirit of Enthusiasm, the fatal tendency of which has always been to unsettle the religious opinions of mankind, and to destroy the peace of the Church.

*Extract from the last Will and Testament of the
late Rev. JOHN BAMPTON, A. M. Canon of
Salisbury.*

ALSO I direct and appoint, that the eight Divinity Lecture Sermons shall be preached upon either of the following subjects—to confirm and establish the Christian Faith, and to confute all heretics and schismatics—upon the divine authority of the Holy Scriptures—upon the authority of the writings of the primitive Fathers as to the faith and practice of the primitive Church—upon the Divinity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ—upon the Divinity of the Holy Ghost—upon the Articles of the Christian Faith, as comprehended in the Apostles' and Nicene Creed.

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PRINCETON
SERMON I.
SEMINARY

I JOHN iv. 1.

BELoved, BELIEVE NOT EVERY SPIRIT, BUT
TRY THE SPIRITS, WHETHER THEY ARE OF
GOD.

WHEN we consider for what purposes the Scriptures were given to mankind; and when we reflect that there is no promise of any further communication of Divine Knowledge, whether for the edification of the Church, or for the confirmation of individuals; we cannot reasonably doubt, but that He who inspired them, designed that many of their precepts should remain of everlasting application.

There are instances indeed, in which, from a change of circumstances, it may be difficult to ascertain precisely, what injunctions were binding upon those alone to whom they were delivered; and what were to be of force equally in succeeding ages. There are other causes too of a mere personal nature, which, by per-

B verting

verting the judgment, will almost of necessity occasion error in this particular. For if men suffer themselves to be influenced by prejudice, or partiality; if they are altogether ignorant and unlearned; if their imagination be inordinate, or their reason imperfect through natural infirmities, then it is more than probable that they will misapply both the promises and the commands of Scripture. These difficulties however do not affect the truth of the general assertion. To us on whom ^a *the ends of the world are come*, even to us, many of the Apostolic injunctions should be considered as still addressed in their full force, and primary signification.

From among these injunctions none perhaps can be selected, which so evidently is of perpetual obligation, as that which is comprised in the words of the text. For when every circumstance is duly weighed, it cannot be thought probable, that the admonition of St. John was limited either to those individuals to whom it was addressed; or to that peculiar occasion which called it forth. Since, as it establishes that there are Spirits, whose suggestions the Christian is forbidden to believe, in whatever manner they may operate,

^a 1 Cor. x. 11.

or whenever they may appear, the duty of suspecting their pretensions is enjoined, and the means of detecting their fallacies implied.

If they then who lived under the immediate care of the Apostles; if they who even witnessed the miracles which attested the cause of truth, required caution in this particular, it cannot be thought wonderful that we should be called upon, to guard ourselves against spiritual delusion.

We are to collect therefore from the text, that, not as a point of speculative knowledge, but of practical utility, we are commanded to examine the pretensions of *every Spirit*^b. For

^b “ By *the spirits* understand, not the men pretending to inspiration; nor the doctrines which they delivered; but the spirits from whence the doctrines proceeded; namely, 1. the Spirit of God: 2. the Spirit of Man himself: or, 3. a Dæmon, or “ wicked Spirit.” *Benson on the Epistles*, vol. ii. p. 588. Many commentators however conceive the word to be descriptive of the teachers themselves: so Hammond, “ Spirits signify teachers pretending to inspiration from God.” See *Note on St. Luke*, chap. ix. ver. 55. See also J. G. Rosenmuller, *Scholia in N. T.* vol. v. p. 521. Πνευμα h. l. est Doctor impulsu Spiritus se loqui perhibens: and again, p. 36. of the same vol. where he explains Πνευματα πλανα, to be, doctores erronei, qui alios ad errores seducunt. The interpretation of Theodoret varies somewhat from both the preceding. Παν πνευμα' ητοι Προφητειας αξιωμα, η Αποστολης. Vid. in loc. The injunction then in this

whether we are to understand by the Spirit which *is not of God*, the operations of that Evil Being, who, himself apostate from truth, seeks occasion to draw us into error ; whether it denote merely the vain conceits of our own imagination ; or finally, whether it describe the extravagant claims of such as pretend to extraordinary illuminations ; still it will be found, that if in the formation of our religious belief, or in the regulation of our religious conduct, we are governed by any principle, but that which is authorised by Scripture, we shall injure the purity and retard the progress of the Gospel.

Without attempting then at present to determine, which of these spirits is the primary object of the Apostolic caution, the general conclusion is obvious. We are to behold ourselves, in our Christian warfare, exposed to the assault of the powers of darkness from without, and from within, to the suggestions of a corrupted nature ; both of which conspire to divert us by delusion from the simplicity of Gospel Truth. As for the peculiar

case would be, " Try the pretensions of every one who assumes " the office of Prophet, or Apostle." But in whatever light the text is viewed, its general import, and the inference to be drawn from it, is the same.

mode of the attack, this will in all probability depend on that peculiar frame of mind with which we are endued. It cannot but vary with the character of each individual. Suggestions, which one would reject, another would receive: this man will be allured by the charms of mysticism; that man will be deceived by the arrogant pretensions of a reasoning philosophy.

But however various the shape, or irregular the appearance, which the Spirit of Delusion may assume; long experience has proved, that there is none under which it has operated so frequently, and so powerfully to the prejudice of Christianity, as under that of Enthusiasm.

It is hoped, that no misconception of terms will lead any one to suppose that this assertion is either dangerous or paradoxical. There is indeed a zeal, an ardour, improperly called Enthusiasm, without which, it has been justly asserted, that nothing great or noble amongst men can ever be produced^c. There is too an holy warmth of devotion, a fervour of sin-

^c See Plato's *Phædrus*. Ed. Bignon. vol. x. p. 315—317. Varro, as quoted by St. Augustine, *Civ. Dei*, lib. iii. cap. 4. and Ridley's *Sermons on the Divinity and Operations of the Holy Ghost*, p. 148.

cerity in Religion, which may be considered as it were the seal, whereby God knows his own. But the Enthusiasm to which we allude bears no affinity to either of the above exalted affections of the mind. Properly speaking, it denotes that self-sufficient spirit, which, placing the conceits of human fancy on a level with real inspiration, has ever proved by its very fruit, that it is not of God.

Perhaps then there is no enquiry which is more immediately suggested by our text, and certainly there is none which can be productive of more general good, than that which may tend to ascertain the origin and the consequences of religious Enthusiasm. For such an investigation is important, not only with regard to the immediate object of its research, but as it stands connected with many other points which are absolutely fundamental in our holy Religion. It will lead, for instance, to the explanation of those principles on which alone religious faith can with security be founded: it will confirm the necessity of a strict adherence to established forms, not as the arbitrary inventions of men, but as the appointed means of grace; it will vindicate the sacred and the salutary restraints of law; and at the same time will shew the necessity of exercising that Christian moderation, which
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instead of quenching, by duly tempering, serves to animate the flame of Christian piety.

This then is the enquiry which will be attempted in the course of the following Lectures ; and I trust it cannot be thought invidious to suggest, that there is something in the character of the present times, which may render it not unworthy the attention of the younger part of this assembly. To the elder part of it, to them who have long since formed their opinions on much mature and dispassionate reflection, it is not presumed that any thing new can be offered. But it may not be unprofitable to convince those who recently have been ordained Ministers of the Established Church, or who are preparing themselves to exercise that most sacred of all functions, that in the regulation of their religious conduct, whether it regard their faith, or their practice, they cannot too carefully reject every thing that proceeds from a spirit of Enthusiasm.

To establish this important truth, we must begin by defining, in the present Lecture, the precise meaning in which it is conceived that this Spirit should be understood. Having done which, it shall be briefly shewn in the second, that Enthusiasm uniformly tends to create schism in the Church ; of which of-

fence the danger, and the guilt, will be more particularly considered.

These points being as it were premised, in the third, fourth, and fifth Lectures, the conduct of some Schismatics, who seem to have been governed by the spirit of Enthusiasm, shall be attentively examined : and if we can expose the fallacy of their pretensions, we may then hope to establish a method, by which, not only in that particular instance, but in every other, the principle itself may be combated successfully.

We then shall proceed to shew of what importance it is to society, that the spirit of Enthusiasm should be carefully repressed ; and that this may be made conspicuous, in the sixth and seventh Lectures we will endeavour to prove, that the injury which is offered by it, not merely to Ecclesiastical, but also to Civil Establishments, is both infinite in its extent, and alarming in its consequences. After which we may urge, with greater confidence, as the general conclusion, that the restraint which we are required to lay on every religious opinion, that is not truly authorised by Scripture, is by no means an arbitrary imposition, but one that arises from the very properties of Revelation : a restraint in no shape prejudicial to that liberty of conscience, which all
men

men are so proud to exercise, but which tends to promote equally the honour of God, and the happiness of mankind.

We are then first of all to consider the nature, and the origin of Enthusiasm. And here, that no part of our enquiry may be liable to misconception, it will be necessary to define accurately the meaning of our terms. For should it be thought that they were employed in a general and indefinite sense, when in fact they are used in one that is absolute and particular, many might object, that our conclusions were not just. This caution therefore must be previously adopted; a caution in every case highly proper, and in the present altogether indispensable; since there is hardly any word which is so vaguely understood, or so incorrectly applied, as Enthusiasm; some esteeming it to be a virtue, and a proof of an exalted mind; others condemning it as a fault, the result of a corrupted judgment, and, in some degree at least, of a corrupted heart^d.

^d Lord Shaftesbury, in his Letter on Enthusiasm, has very artfully availed himself of the vague meaning of the word. For omitting to define in what sense he considers Enthusiasm, he takes occasion to mock Religion under every shape; confounding the pure and rational faith of the pious Christian, with the extravagances of the Fanatic. Every one who has

It is remarkable however that the word *Enthusiasm* is no where to be found in Scripture. To ascertain its precise meaning therefore, we must enquire in what sense it was employed by those, with whom its use has been familiar.

To *Enthusiasm* the Gentile world attributed two distinct significations^e. In its primary sense they believed it to be an actual and a violent possession of the mind, by some supernatural power; a possession, which suspended for the time the operation both of the reason

read that very profane and insidious Essay, will perceive the force of the observation of old, ὅς αν εἶδῃ τα ονοματα εισεται και τα πραγματα. *Plato*.

^e Casaubon, in his Treatise concerning *Enthusiasm*, makes the same general division. His definition however of supernatural *Enthusiasm* must be, in part, objected to. "By supernatural, I understand a true and real possession, whether divine or diabolical, producing effects and operations, altogether "supernatural." P. 22. Now this confounds *Inspiration* with *Enthusiasm*; making them the same. To combat this opinion, and to shew that they are things essentially different, is one great object of these Lectures. Chrysostom has marked the difference with much accuracy. Εν τοις εἰδωλοις, εἰποτε κατερχεθη τις ὑπο πνευματος ακαθαρτε και εμαντευατο, ὡςπερ απαγομενος, οὕτως εἴληκετο ἱπο τε πνευματος δεδεμενος, ἡδεν εἶδως ὡν λεγει. τειλο γαρ μανηεις ἰδιον, το εξεξηκεναι, το αναγκην ὑπομενειν, το ὠδεισθαι, το ελκεσθαι, το συρεσθαι ὡςπερ μαυνομενον· ὁ δε προφητης ουχ οὕτως, αλλα μελα διανοιας ἠφουσης, και σωφροσυσης καταστασεως, και εἶδως ἃ φθελγεται, φησιν ἅπαντα. *Homil.* κκix. in 1. *Epist.* ad *Corin.* ed. Benedic. vol. x. p. 259.

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and of the will ; rendering the person thus affected, a mere passive instrument to announce whatever was suggested^f. Effects of this nature can now be referred to no other cause than to the power of dæmons : yet as these were then considered to be gods, the Enthusiasm produced was consequently called divine ; and was applied properly, perhaps exclusively, in a religious light, to sibyls, oracular priests, and those who exercised the art of divination^g.

^f The words of Jamblicus are exactly to the point. Παρεσι δ' εὐδύς (ἡ τε Θεὸς παρουσία) καὶ χρεῖται ὡς ὄργανον τῷ προφητῇ, οὐτε ἑαυτὲς οὐτι, οὐτε παρακολουθεῖντι οὐδενὶ οἷς λέγει, ἢ ὅπου γῆς εἰν. *De Mysteriorum*, sec. iii. c. xi. So again, c. 4. ἡ γὰρ τὴν ἑαυτῶν ζῶν ὑποτεθεικασιν ὄλην, ὡς ὄχημα ἢ ὄργανον τοῖς ἐπιπνεύουσι θεοῖς. But it were endless to transcribe all the passages of Pagan authors, which may be adduced to prove, how uniformly they thought that the passiveness of the instrument was an essential mark of divine Enthusiasm. Perhaps however no one has described the effect more beautifully or characteristically than Virgil :

At, Phœbi nondum patiens, immanis in antro
Bacchatur vates, magnum si pectore possit
Excussisse deum : tanto magis ille fatigat
Os rabidum, fera corda domans, fingitque premento.

Æn. vi. ver. 77. and above, ver. 46.

^g So entirely did they conceive Divination and Enthusiasm to be the same thing, that they derived the word expressive of the latter, from the former : as Plato relates in the *Phædrus*, vol. x. p. 316. where he says, that the ancients thought so highly of Enthusiasm (*μανία*), that, τῇ καλλίστῃ τεχνῇ ἢ το μέλλον κρινεταί,

In a secondary sense it was distinguished by the name of Natural Enthusiasm. It then admitted of a more extensive application; and was attributed indiscriminately to poets, orators, and men of genius.

To judge of the propriety of this latter distinction, we should remember, that the term was now adopted to describe, not that natural propensity which led these men originally to embrace their several pursuits; but rather that extraordinary fervor, which in particular moments hurried them on to great exertions, with an impetuosity that seemed hardly refer-

κρίνεται, αὐτοῦ τοῦτο τὸ νομᾶ εμπλεκόντες, μανικὴν ἐκάλεσαν, —οἱ δὲ οὖν ἀπειροκαλῶς τὸ Ταῦ ἐπεμβολοῦντες μανικὴν ἐκάλεσαν. Cicero makes the same observation, in the opening to his first Book de Divinatione, lib. i. sec. i. There were however some among the Heathen, who wisely perceived that Divination depended upon the imaginative faculty, and thence inferred the delusiveness of the principle. Plato himself observed, that sometimes the power of divining came not upon men, unless in sleep, when the reason was not free to act; or when they had suffered some alienation of mind, either from sickness, or enthusiasm. He therefore considers it to be inferior to sober wisdom, and maintains that it should be subjected to its decisions. Εἰ δὲ βουλοῖτο γὰρ, καὶ τὴν μαντικὴν εἶναι ἑυχχρησώμεν ἐπισήμην τῇ μελλόντος ἰσθᾶναι καὶ τὴν σωφροσύνην, αὐτῆς ἱπιστατούσαν, τοὺς μὲν ἀλαζονίας ἀποτρέπειν, τοὺς δὲ ὡς ἀληθῶς μαντεῖς καθίσταναι ἡμῖν προφῆτας τῶν μελλόντων. Charmides, vol. v. p. 149. See a Treatise on Prophecy, p. 194. of J. Smith's *Select Discourses*. Lond. 1660.

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rible to any human cause^h. And as it was observed, that while this affection lasted, many new ideas, many strong and vivid thoughts flashed suddenly upon the mind, these were mistaken for actual inspiration sometimes by those who experienced the effect; and at all times, by the ignorant and credulous, were conceived to denote the presence of some favouring deityⁱ. Nevertheless, to the dispassionate observer it was evident that this

^h *Quid vestra oratio in causis? quid ipsa actio? potest esse vehemens et gravis, et copiosa nisi est animus ipse commotior? Equidem etiam in te sæpe vidi, et (ut ad leviora veniamus) in Æsopo familiari tuo tantum ardorem vultuum, atque motuum, ut eum vis quædam abstraxisse à sensu mentis videretur. Cicero de Divinat. lib. i. sec. 37.*

ⁱ Tasso asserted, that for many years he used to converse with a celestial being. “ Si fece all’ orecchio quel gentile spirito “ che quattro anni sono, sua mercede, cortesemente mi favella.” Vol. v. Florence ed. p. 1. When his friend Manso would have proved to him the absurdity of such a conceit, Tasso’s argument was this: “ He teaches me things in our conversations, “ which never have entered my head in my deepest medita- “ tions; things which I have never read in any book, or heard “ any person discourse of.” See the Life of Tasso prefixed to the above edition, vol. i. p. 45, 6, 7. For a further account of this singular delusion, see Hoole’s Life of Tasso. What credit should be given to the reality of the appearance, every one may judge, when Tasso himself, speaking of a vision which he had some time previous, says: “ Potesse facilmente essere una fan- “ tasia; perch’io sono frenetico e quasi sempre perturbato da “ varii fantasmi, e pieno di melancholia.” Vol. v. p. 217.

Enthu-

Enthusiasm differed widely from that which was supernatural. The visible effect produced in either case might be nearly the same. In both there was a rapturous expression of voice and countenance; in both too there was a violent agitation of the frame, and an absolute unconsciousness of external objects. Still however in the latter instance there was nothing that might not be referred to natural causes. For it was observed, that some by the mere effort of a glowing fancy, and others by an intent application of their thoughts to one particular object, would almost at pleasure transport themselves to such heights, as persons of less sanguine tempers could never attain to. Arguing therefore from these facts, they excluded the notion of divine interposition, and they referred this sort of Enthusiasm solely to the force of the imagination, and the co-operation of the will.

Whenever therefore the word Enthusiasm occurs in these Lectures, I could wish that it might be understood in reference to one of these definitions; and then it will either signify an effect wrought irresistibly upon the mind by supernatural agency; or else, a delusion produced by the vehement action of the imagination ^k.

^k Maimonides, in treating of the nature of real Inspiration says :

It may be feared however, that Enthusiasts, of whatever denomination, will object to both of the above definitions. For should the latter be accepted, they will be degraded to the rank of idle visionaries ; or, again, should the former be adopted, unless it can be shewn that their inspiration proceeds immediately from the Holy Ghost, it follows that they must have been under the influence of dæmoniacal delusion. Humiliating as in either case the alternative must prove, nevertheless, as the characters of their Enthusiasm are precisely the same with those which distinguished the Enthusiasm of heathen times, it must be attributed to the same causes : in the one instance, to the imagination, which, overpowering the judgment, leads men to mistake

says : “ But I must caution you, that there are some men, who “ have sometimes such strange fancies, dreams, and visions, “ that they have persuaded themselves that they were Pro- “ phets ; and being quite astonished that they should have “ such imaginations, they have at last conceived that all sciences “ and faculties are infused into them, without either study or “ labour.” *More Nevocbin*, pars ii. cap. 37. But as religious Enthusiasts seem to disregard whatever is urged, concerning the power of the imagination, by their opponents in the Church, they would do well to read what medical men have uniformly asserted on this head. Fienus, a celebrated physician of the sixteenth century, wrote a treatise expressly *de Viribus Imaginationis* ; printed by Elzevir, in 8vo. 1635.

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the suggestions of fancy for the inspirations of God: in the other, to the operation of that spiritual enemy, against whom we are called upon to wrestle, the *ruler of the darkness of this world*¹; and the *prince of the power of the air*^m.

On this last-mentioned source of Enthusiasm it is not our intention to insist. There are many reasons why the enquiry will be more useful, if it is confined to the consideration of that delusion which is caused by the imagination.

If we forbear however to insist on the positive agency of the evil Spirit in cases of Enthusiasm, let it not be thought that this argues an inability to prove, in some instances, his actual interference. Far from it. Express declarations of Scripture; attested evidences of factsⁿ; and the very existence of a spiritual world, might all be adduced to establish the reality of dæmoniacal possession. Should it then be suggested, that delusions of this

¹ Ephesians vi. 12.

^m Ephesians ii. 2.

ⁿ See Bishop Bull's Sermons, vol. ii. p. 456. Dr. Hicks's *Ravillac Redivivus*. Leslie's Snake in the Grass, sect. xxi. Though that controversy be closed, those parts of Mr. Leslie's writings which regard it, will for ever deserve attention.

nature never did exist ; or should it be urged, that if they once deceived the Heathen, they cannot now affect the Christian world ; more, infinitely more, would be advanced than ought to be asserted, on the one hand, or can be granted on the other. We will readily allow, that repeated instances of imposture and of credulity ought to make us cautious how we admit any account of supernatural possession : we will gratefully acknowledge also, that the power of Satan has been sensibly restrained since the coming of our Lord : still this does not prove that it has been so abridged as to leave us nothing to fear from its operation °. As a spiritual agent, under certain circumstances surely he may be supposed to have still the means of affecting our minds with false im-

° It is remarkable that Jamblicus describes it to be a *sure sign* of divine inspiration among the Pagans, when the body of the person possessed was seen to be raised up from the ground. Το σωμα επαιρομενον οραται, η διοκουμενον, η μετεωρον εν τη αερι φερομενον. Sect. iii. c. 5. There is hardly a religious Enthusiast, of the present times, who is not described as having been affected in a similar manner. It is asserted of *S. Teresa*, that she was frequently seen raised off the ground in these raptures, and suspended in the air. See Appendix to Crichton on Mental Derangement, vol. ii. p. 452. Her own words are remarkable : “ When I had a mind to resist these raptures, there seemed to “ me somewhat of so mighty force under my feet, which raised “ me up, that I knew not what to compare it to.” *Butler's Lives of the Saints*, vol. x. p. 359.

pressions: and as a malicious one, if we lay ourselves open to his assaults, unquestionably he will never cease from wishing to deceive us. It matters little therefore whether we be Pagan or Christian, since if we *receive not the love of the truth*, but rather *have pleasure in unrighteousness*, Satan has even yet permission to exercise such power as shall make us trust to *strong delusions, and believe a lie* ^p.

I am aware, that the propriety of attributing such effects as these to the agency of a spiritual being will be questioned by some, who say that they altogether doubt the existence of the cause. For as in former times, so likewise in the present, there have not been wanting those who consider what is called in Scripture the Evil One, to be nothing more than the natural operation of those passions, which are incidental to the minds of all men: in consequence of which they maintain, that we cannot be tempted by any other suggestions, than by such as proceed from our own natural desires. But this notion, though it might be introduced into metaphysical enquiries, cannot with the least propriety be admitted into those which proceed solely upon the ground of scriptural

^p 2 Thessal. ii. 10, 11, 12.

authority. For in these latter, we are not at liberty to argue from any thing but that which has been positively revealed; and whatever is thus revealed, becomes an axiom, upon which all our future reasoning must depend; even though it should be found a stumbling-block to the system of the Philosopher; and though from the councils of the Libertine, it should be rejected as foolishness^a.

Appealing therefore to Revelation, we are told, in words too plain to be refined away, that there exists an Evil Being, the enemy of man, whose powers of delusion, like himself, are real; a being, who, though he be spiritual, and consequently not an object which human sense can apprehend, is nevertheless bu-

^a “ We are certain from Scripture, that there are now a great multitude of evil angels, joined in association with, and headed by, the Prince of Darkness, and therefore called his angels, uniting their forces against God, and goodness, and good men.” *Bishop Bull’s Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 455. “ As for those modern Sadducees, who will believe neither Angel, nor Spirit, because they cannot see them; and with whom *invincible* and *incredible* pass for terms equipollent; they would do well to consider, that as the fowler would certainly spoil his game, should he not as much as possible keep out of sight, so the devil never plants his snares so successfully as when he conceals his person; nor tempts men so dangerously as when he can persuade them that there is no tempter.” *South’s Sermons*, vol. v. p. 100. The whole discourse is conceived and written with great ability.

sily employed in going *to and fro upon the earth, seeking whom he may devour*¹. Seeing then that Scripture is thus explicit; and seeing too that our Church has uniformly maintained the literal and obvious meaning of those passages, in which the powers of darkness are described; in defining Enthusiasm, we might adopt the very words which are employed by the Ecclesiastical Historian, Theodoret; who, speaking of the schism of the Messaliani, uses these remarkable expressions: “They are called Enthusiasts,” he says, “because, though they suffer themselves to be worked upon by the power of some evil Spirit, they nevertheless conceive that the effects they experience are occasioned by the presence of the Holy Ghost^s.”

Why these Spirits should be permitted to retain the means of deceiving us, it is not our

¹ Job i. 7. 1 Peter v. 8.

² Εχουσιν δι και ἑτεραν προσηγοριαν εκ τε πραγματος γενομενην. Ενθουσιασται γαρ καλενται δαιμονος τινος ενεργειας εισδεχομενοι, και Πνευματος ၙγιου παρουσιαν ταυτην ἱπολαμβάνοντες. Theodoriti Eccl. Hist. lib. iv. c. 11. For farther particulars of this sect see Suiceri Thesaur. Eccles. ad voc. Ευχισται; which name they assumed because they were incessant in prayer. See also Mosheim Eccles. Hist. vol. i. p. 226. 4to. ed. Their tenets bear a wonderful resemblance to those of many modern Fanatics: see them detailed in Ridley's Moyer's Lect. p. 148. and more at length, Hist. Eccl. Magdeburgica, Cent. iv. c. 5. p. 387.

province to enquire. We may remark, however, that such a permission seems to be perfectly consistent with the usual course of God's moral government of the world. He who in his power can *restrain his creatures' wrath*, can equally in his wisdom order all things so, as that the *remainder of that wrath shall praise him*^t. Exactly thus in the case before us, while he appoints the bound, beyond which, for our safety, the malice of Satan cannot pass; he makes its operation subservient to the great design, of *proving what is in our hearts, whether we will keep his commandments or no*^u.

Let it however be clearly understood, that in thus asserting the existence and the operations of an Evil Spirit, whatever has been advanced must be understood with certain limitations. We are not to suppose that a malicious Being can have permission to inspire us with passions, or to distract us with visions, at his pleasure. Such a supposition would entirely militate against that merciful system, by which the freedom of the human will is at all times ensured. But if our negligence, our wilfulness, or our presumption; nay, if

^t Psalm lxxvi. 10.

^u Deut. viii. 2.

even the very infirmities of our nature afford the slightest opportunity, how natural is it to conclude, that our spiritual enemy will improve it, as the means whereby to operate the most fatal delusions ! Thus when our imagination is active and fervent, and our apprehension susceptible, may he not so heighten those impressions which are made by external objects, as that we may be finally persuaded to refer them to supernatural causes ? In the same manner too, when we have formed to ourselves some particular system, and have engaged every passion in its support, may he not so work upon our feelings, as that we shall be led insensibly to believe that these favourite opinions were suggested by divine inspiration ?

And this probably is the foundation whereon are built all such Enthusiasms, as, properly speaking, may be attributed to the agency of the Devil. For some men, whether through ignorance, or conceit, frame to themselves extravagant notions as to the manner in which the Holy Ghost is to operate upon the human mind. They imagine, for instance, that He is to convey sudden illuminations ; that He is to reveal truths before unheard of ; to communicate rapturous sensations, and feelingly to interfere with the direction of their

their conduct. When a person therefore is occupied with these preconceptions, it is obvious that a deceiving spirit may so avail himself of them, as to persuade him, that any unusual sensation, which he may chance to experience, when heated by the force of imagination, or even when labouring under the pressure of human infirmities, is occasioned by the gracious operation of the Holy Ghost.

Supposing then that our spiritual Enemy derives the power of exciting Enthusiasm in us from the causes here assigned, the means of counteracting his malice are not only simple, but such as the Scriptures themselves suggest. Establish but a standard, by which the mode and the measures of that assistance which the Holy Spirit imparts may be ascertained, and the suggestions of that Spirit which is not of God must be easily detected. Let this standard be that measure as well of knowledge as of grace, which was vouchsafed to the Apostles^x: more than this no one can

^x Enthusiasts say, that it is presumptuous to make the past operations of the Holy Ghost a criterion to judge of what may be in future expected. "Is he not God? Shall men limit his power? His ways are not our ways," &c. A little reflection will shew the fallaciousness of this mode of reasoning. A miraculous power of distinguishing false inspiration from true, was granted to the first Christians by the Holy Ghost himself.

desire, and far less ought to be expected. For the vastness of the object to be attained by the establishment of Christianity, the inveteracy of the errors it was to conquer, and the insignificance of the human means employed, these were causes which rendered at that time some signal interposition on the part of Heaven both expedient and probable. But in the present day, the exigences of the case being infinitely less, the assistance to be communicated will be proportionably less also. The argument however may stand as it was first proposed; only let us have the modesty to allow, that the measure of Divine Grace now afforded to individuals, does not exceed that which was originally granted to the witnesses of the Resurrection, and the partakers in the sufferings of their Lord.

Now whatever degree of inspiration they received, it was evidently no more than what was perfectly consistent with the natural freedom of the human will. It superseded not, it rather promoted the calm and the impartial

To one is given the power of working miracles, to another discerning of Spirits. 1 Cor. xii. 10. This gift has long since been withdrawn. How may we venture to supply its place, but by *comparing things claiming to be spiritual, with things known to be spiritual?* Can we in any way evince, more becomingly, our distrust of human sufficiency, and our reliance upon God?

exercise

exercise of reason^y. It required not that the strength of their bodies should be impaired by gloomy austerities; or that their minds should be previously heated by the force of imagination. It rather presupposed the entire possession, and preserved to them the free exercise of every rational faculty. It is true, that in these moments divine truths were so clearly conveyed to their apprehensions, that they could not but see the propriety of assenting to them^z. Their assent however appears

^y “ From what hath been said, ariseth one main characteristical distinction between the Prophetical and Pseudo-Prophetical Spirit; namely, that the Prophetical Spirit doth never alienate the mind, (seeing it seats itself in the rational powers, as well as in the sensitive,) but always maintains a consistency and clearness of reason, strength and solidity of judgment, where it comes; it doth not ravish the mind, but inform and enlighten it.” *Smith’s Select Discourses*, p. 197. So Huetius, in his *Dem. Evang.* “ Scio hoc Patres Ecclesiæ discrimen observasse sanctos inter Prophetas, et Pseudo-Prophetas: quod hi furore perciti, illi tranquilliori et sedationi mente futura profarentur; atque hoc potissimum argumento convicisse Montanum, Priscam, et Maximillam, propheticam sibi vim arrogantes, quod emotà mente furiosis et insanis similes raptarentur; cum Prophetæ sui compotes, placido, serenoque animo edere soleant oracula.” *Prop. ix. c. 171. sec. 4.* The Jewish writers, though they admitted eleven degrees of inspiration, nevertheless maintained, that in each the reason was unclouded, and its free exercise preserved. *Maimonides, More Nevachim*, pars ii. c. 37. et seq.

^z This appears to have been the case, even in the instance of
St.

to have resulted uniformly from the joint operation of the understanding, and of the will; for they were at liberty in the first instance to have withholden their assent to the truths proposed, and afterwards might have even refused to teach them to others^a. Which facts are of themselves sufficient to establish, that the influence of the Holy Spirit bears no affinity to that of the Spirit of Enthusiasm: for of Enthusiasm these are the characteristic properties. It overpowers the will; it destroys all consciousness; it suspends the very functions of nature, and compels the utterance of the things inspired^b. When there-

St. Paul. His conversion was miraculous, not because faith was infused supernaturally, but because the evidences of that faith were supernaturally placed before him. He believed that *Jesus of Nazareth* had suffered justly, as a false Prophet; and that he had not risen from the dead. But having once seen him in his glorified state, (Acts xxvi. 16.) and having conversed with him, his reason was fully satisfied that Christ was indeed the Lord. That his will co-operated with his reason, the subsequent fervor of his prayers attested. Acts ix. 11.

^a Διαίνοι τελοῦ καὶ τε εἰπεῖν, καὶ τε μὴ εἰπεῖν ἦσαν κύριοι· ὃ γὰρ ἀναγκὴ κατεχόρευτο, ἀλλ' ἐξουσία ἦσαν τετιμημένοι. διὰ τοῦτο καὶ Ἰωάνης ἐφυγε, διὰ τοῦτο καὶ Ἰεζεκιὴλ ἀνέσθλητο, διὰ τοῦτο καὶ Ἰερεμίας παρητηρεῖτο. ὁ δὲ Θεὸς οὐ μετὰ ἀναγκῆς αὐτοὺς ὤθει, ἀλλὰ συμβουλευσιν, παραινῶν, ἀπειλῶν, οὐ σκοτῶν τὴν διάνοιαν. *Chrysostom. ad I Corin. Hom. 29.* vol. x. p. 261.

^b Plutarch indeed maintains a more moderate opinion: Οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶ θεοῦ ἡ γῆρυς, οὐδὲ ὁ φθογλός, οὐδὲ ἡ λέξις, οὐδὲ τὸ μετрон, ἀλλὰ

fore St. Paul said, *Woe is me, if I do not preach the Gospel^c*; with what consistency could this have been spoken, had the operation of the Holy Ghost rendered him but a passive instrument to declare the truths revealed? Or again, how could the same Apostle have exhorted Timothy to *study the Scriptures, which were able to make him wise unto Salvation^d*; had knowledge been communicated in such a manner, as would have superseded the ordinary means of instruction; and thus have made it unnecessary to consult either the understanding or the will?

I am sensible indeed, that when the blessed Jesus revealed the promise of the Holy Ghost, he described him in the following terms: *The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom*

της γυναικος· εκείνος δε μονος τας φαντασιαις παρισησι, και φως εν τη ψυχη ποιει προς το μελλον· ο γαρ ενδουσιασμος τοιουτου εστιν.—See his treatise *Περί του μη χραν εμμετρα*.—*Moralia*, Oxf. ed. vol. ii. p. 432. But it has been often remarked, that the influence of Christianity was so great, as to oblige the very Pagan Philosophers who opposed it to give some plausible colouring to those tenets, which were before asserted with unqualified extravagance.

^c 1 Cor. ix. 16.

^d 2 Tim. iii. 15. See Bishop Bull's Sermons, vol. ii. p. 398. where he proves, that divinely inspired persons did not so wholly depend upon inspiration, but that they made use of the ordinary means of obtaining knowledge.

the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things; and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you^e. From which words some have been inclined to argue, that Christians in every age of the Church may expect to derive the knowledge of divine truths from immediate inspiration. There is nothing however in the above promise that can either justify so delusive an expectation, or invalidate our former conclusions. Be it granted that the passage in question contains two distinct propositions; the first, that the Holy Ghost would so recall to the minds of the Apostles every precept in which they had been instructed by their divine Master, that they should be able to teach them unerringly to others: the second, that he should give them such farther communications, as might be necessary to secure the establishment of Christianity: yet can any

^e John xiv. 26. It is a melancholy thing to observe how Enthusiasts have wrested this promise from its true meaning, by assuming that it was designed to be of universal, not of particular application. In like manner they pervert the prophecy of Joel ii. 28. cited by St. Peter, Acts ii. 17. and many others. This is noticed and admirably well treated of by Hammond, in his "*Postscript concerning new Light*," prefixed to his Paraphrase of the New Testament. Surely if those few pages were read with an humble spirit, sincerely searching after truth, it would go far to cure the errors of Enthusiasm.

thing

thing be hence inferred to countenance the idea of enthusiastic possession? Certainly not; unless it can be proved that the Holy Spirit in these instances did act upon the Apostles in a manner altogether strange and unexampled. But as this, so far at least as the Scriptures inform us, was not the case, it must be thought unreasonable to maintain so unwarranted an assumption.

But yet farther. How can any one presume to apply generally, a promise that was made particularly? And that the above promise was made to the Apostles exclusively, the very words, in which it was conveyed, demonstrate. All things shall be brought to *your remembrance*, whatsoever *I have told you*. *I have yet many things to say unto you; but ye cannot bear them now: howbeit, when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth*^f. Surely it will not be doubted but that these promises, whatever their full import be, must have been restricted to those to whom they were delivered. Besides which, observe the propriety, or, if we may say so, the very necessity of the distinction. The commission of the Apostles was comprised in these words: *Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel*

^f John xvi. 12, 13.

to every creature^g. But this precluded the possibility of attaining such previous knowledge as was necessary to qualify them for the office, by means of study and reflection : their preaching nevertheless was to confound the pride of human learning ; and their writings were to close the Canon of Scripture. How could these ends have been attained then, but by an illumination, which should place them beyond the reach of error ? With the Christian Minister at present the case is widely different. Called upon to exercise the duties of his office, after many years of preparation, he has not only the opportunity of confirming in his mind the *evidences of his faith*, but it is his duty, and his glory, to have done so. After which, moving in a limited sphere, he has daily the means of consulting the *lively oracles of God*, in every thing that is necessary *for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and instruction in righteousness*^h. There is nothing therefore, that can justify us in looking for immediate revelations, but the belief that there remains something to be taught to us, that was withheld from the Apostles. To assert this, would be to assert in other words, that Christianity was imperfectly revealed at first ; which would

^g Mark xvi. 15.

^h 2 Tim. iii. 6.

be to contradict the whole of Scripture, and impeach the ways of the Almighty. As far then as concerns the present question, we conclude, that it is only by strengthening our natural faculties to apprehend, and our wills to embrace the truths which are proposed to us in Scripture, that the Holy Ghost now operates upon the human mind; consequently, all pretension to rapturous communications of divine knowledge is enthusiastic delusion.

To make this position, if possible, still more evident, let it be observed, that at the very time when the operations of the Holy Spirit were confessedly the most sensible, even then there is no example of his having wrought those effects which are attendant upon Enthusiasm. We read, for instance, that it was under his immediate guidance that Philip converted the Ethiopian Eunuch: yet the means employed were in strict conformity to the principles for which we contend. The disciple did but *preach Jesus, beginning at the Scriptures*, and proving, from authenticated facts, that in him were fulfilled those prophecies, which described the Saviour of the world. Struck with this evidence, the Eunuch said, *What doth hinder me to be baptised? If thou believest with all thine heart*, returned his instructor,

structor, *thou mayest*ⁱ. So that this conversion, though marked with a more direct interference on the part of Heaven than almost every other, was effected not by any enthusiastical illumination of the understanding on the one hand, or by an overpowering of the will on the other, but by a calm appeal to dispassionate reason.

In like manner too, when St. Peter explained the nature of his faith^k, or when St. Stephen defended it before the Jewish Council^l, they are declared to have been *full of the Holy Ghost*: yet in neither instance can we discover the slightest tincture of the enthusiastic Spirit; both referring to the written laws and history of their country; and proving from them, in a close connected chain of reasoning, the truth of Christianity.

Once indeed the fervent manner of St. Paul involved him in the charge of Enthusiasm^m; but not only did he at the very mo-

ⁱ Acts viii. 26.

^k Acts iv. 8.

^l Acts vi. 8. and vii. to the end.

^m Acts xxvi. 24. The meaning of the word *μανα*—Enthusiasm (see the previous notes to page 10. and 11. and Schleusner's Lexicon in voc. *μανομαι*) and the use of the word *σωφροσυνη*, which is immediately opposed to it, and describes the perfect possession of reason, free from all passion; must lead us to conclude, that Festus conceived the Apostle to have spoken, not under the impressions

ment publicly refute it, but also, in the course of a long and an illustrious career, he gave the most convincing proof that every action was guided by the calm dictates of unimpassioned reason. When disputing with Gentile philosophers, instead of referring to his own experience of revelation, he argued with them upon the ground of human learningⁿ: when unjustly imprisoned, he patiently forgave the injury, but he publicly demanded the justification of his conduct^o; and when taken for a superior being, he delayed not, but instantly rejected the unwarranted distinction: *Sirs, we also are men of like passions with you; and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God*^p. Thus too, in every moment consistent, amid the tumult of parties, he defends himself, not by pleading any immunity from that high commission

impressions of actual insanity, but under those of Enthusiasm. When therefore St. Paul shewed that he was conscious what words he uttered; and that he perfectly knew both their meaning and their application, the charge was sufficiently confuted: for *ἐνθουσιαζόντες—λεγουσὶ μὲν πολλὰ καὶ καλά, ἰσασι δὲ οὐδέν, ὡς λεγουσὶ*. Platonis Apologia Socratis, vol. i. p. 51.

ⁿ Acts xvii. 22. See Littleton's admirable *Observations on the Conversion and Apostleship of St. Paul*, p. 70, 71.

^o Acts xvi. 37.

^p Acts xiv. 15.

which he bore, but by a just assertion of his civic rights^a; before the haughtiest tribunals he combats the prejudices of his enemies, not by the boldness of his assertions, but by the gentleness of his behaviour^r; and though *persecuted, afflicted, tormented*, he still reveres the sacredness of human laws, and flies to them for protection^s.

A conduct thus invariably great is of itself a sufficient evidence to prove that the Apostle was never actuated by Enthusiasm; and brings us to the same conclusion which has been just before obtained, namely, that when the minds of men are violently agitated by capricious and inconsistent feelings; when they are impelled to actions by irresistible impulses; when they utter without consciousness strange and mysterious speeches, they must be considered as being then under the influence of an Enthusiasm, which can proceed from him alone, whom the Scriptures describe as the father of delusion.

But let us wave all reference to this species of Enthusiasm. Though it was proper to ascertain that the case might really occur, it never was our design to make it the imme-

^a Acts xxii. 25. ^r Acts xxiii. 5. ^s Acts xxv. 11, 12.

diate object of our enquiry. Henceforward therefore we shall consider that Enthusiasm alone, which results from an heated imagination. Perhaps, indeed, it is impossible that we should at any time be in a state of error, without falling in some shape, more or less, into *the snare of the devil*^t. To a certain degree therefore his suggestions may be supposed to aggravate the evils even of natural Enthusiasm: but as far as concerns the rise and the progress of the delusion itself, these will be found to depend absolutely upon human causes: that is, on the will, deliberately adopting the suggestions of fancy as the inspirations of God. For we have only to reflect that reason has been given to man exclusively, that he might decide on the nature of all those impressions which are conveyed to his apprehension. It is then the office of that reason to consider attentively each appearance as it occurs, ascertaining by certain rules, what things are real, and consequently to be believed; what things are illusion, and consequently to be rejected. If therefore we receive as true, things which are established by no proof; or, what amounts to the same, by such proof as is merely imaginary; it fol-

^t 1 Tim. iii. 7.

lows that every consequent delusion must be of our own deliberate creation ; that is, must arise either from the supine neglect, or from the wilful abuse of our reason.

When therefore some would maintain that Enthusiasm is a distinct principle of itself, like many other affections, existing naturally in the mind ; or again, when others contend that it is a noble energy of soul peculiar to such as are of a more exalted temper ; the fallacy of both these opinions may be soon detected. As to the former of them indeed, we are in fact so little concerned with it, that we need not stop here to prove that it is justified neither by reason or experience. As to the latter, how far it may or may not be just, when applied to human attainments, we shall not enquire^u : we are to consider it

^u What we admire in the soldier, or the scholar, for instance, as Enthusiasm, is something quite distinct from that of which we are treating. The enthusiastic scholar does not pretend that he obtained his knowledge by illumination ; nor the enthusiastic soldier, that he performed any great achievement by divine inspiration. Did they make these assertions, they would be treated as objects of ridicule rather than of honour. Their enthusiasm consequently means nothing more than a laudable warmth of zeal in their several pursuits ; and in this case the use of the word is improper, and may be dangerous. At all events, if it be tolerated in this sense in familiar conversation, it ought never to be so employed in writing.

solely as applied to Religion, and that too, in the strict meaning of our previous definition; in which case it will appear, that Enthusiasm, so far from being the proof of any superior mental excellence, betrays a weakness of understanding, and a strength of passion, which are more properly subjects of humiliation than of glory. The circumstances of the case need only be stated to establish the position. The first conceit of divine illumination in the mind of the Enthusiast is owing to the inordinate action of his imagination, which, when vehemently excited, is known to represent ideal objects so vividly to the apprehension, that they are mistaken for material ones. His subsequent belief in the reality of this illumination arises from the natural defect, or from the wilful perversion, of his reason; in consequence of which he is either unable or unwilling to detect the fallacy of those pretensions by which he is deluded. What is there then in his Enthusiasm, that does not contribute to degrade rather than exalt his character? And that this may be still more evident, let us ascend one step higher, and observe what it was that first excited his imagination to form the preposterous conceit of supernatural illuminations. To suppose that the imagination, without any external

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ternal cause, can excite itself, and determine itself to one particular object, is altogether contrary to the nature of things. Some external principle of action then must exist: and as it is observable that the Enthusiast is uniformly occupied in procuring his own exaltation, often by asserting his individual excellence, and always by contriving some system of which he is to be honoured as the father, and feared as the governor; we cannot but argue, that the love of distinction, and the hope of preeminence, were the causes which first called forth the powers of his imagination. To the unworthy but powerful passions therefore of pride, of vanity, and of ambition, all Enthusiasm perhaps should be, in strict propriety, referred^{*}.

In confirmation of which I would observe, that these passions, whether separately or jointly exercised, have frequently excited, even in the ordinary pursuits of life, the very same

^{*} Some persons are disposed to think that pride, vanity, and ambition, are rather the consequents than the antecedents to Enthusiasm: but we may earnestly request them to consider what difficulties must follow such a supposition. If Enthusiasm have no exciting cause, it must be altogether inspired; an idea which can be never admitted, without absolutely destroying the freedom of the human will, and placing us at the mercy of the Evil One. I feel persuaded therefore that the principle on which we argue, will be, after a little reflection, admitted.

effects which occur in Religious Enthusiasm ; creating an entire conviction of spiritual communications, and of divine assistance, in concerns, which no unprejudiced person can judge deserving such sacred interference^y. This point established the argument in favour of our position is at once both obvious and conclusive. If pride, and vanity, and self-confidence, produce such effects in cases which have no connexion with revelation; when applied to religion, which depends upon it, they may naturally be expected to produce effects, similar in their appearance, but in their degree much stronger, and more lasting. For let the two cases be dispassionately considered.

The pursuits of active life, and the specu-

^y A striking instance of this sort occurs in the life of Benvenuto Cellini, as written by himself. He professes to believe that the Almighty miraculously assisted him to make one of his statues : see the whole account, vol. ii. chap. vi. p. 262. where he records the prayer which he made on the occasion. The relation he gives, vol. i. chap. xiii. p. 480. of his conversations with God, his prayers for divine inspiration, and his subsequent vision, betrays an enthusiasm bordering on actual phrensy. He even asserted that his head was surrounded by a sort of glory, which was visible to the eye. “ This I mention,” he says, “ in justice to God, and the wondrous ways of his Providence.” vol. ii. p. 5. Had Cellini’s thoughts been turned to religious studies, he would have become almost unavoidably an Enthusiast.

lations of human science, are too manifestly connected with external objects, are too much dependent on the force of personal application, to admit easily the notion of divine interposition. Whatever our works may be, they are clearly such as the devices of the heart of man would lead him to conceive; they are such too, as attain beneath his hand to gradual perfection, and owe their existence to the skill and the means of the contriver. Is it not evident therefore that here, men would refer their inventions to their own industry and genius, rather than to any spiritual illumination?

But in Religion the case is different. There, the truths which we can discover are so few, that the more we reflect, the more we perceive our insufficiency. Who is there that *by searching can find out God?* who is there that *by reasoning can find out the Almighty to perfection*²? Not in one particular point therefore, but in all that regard this high subject, we feel, with the great Gentile Philosopher, the necessity of waiting till we are taught³.

² Job xi. 7.

³ In the second Alcibiades of Plato: where Socrates, having proved the difficulty of knowing *how to pray*, concludes, ἀναγκαῖον ἔν ἐστι περιμένειν ἕως ἂν τις μάθῃ, ὡς δεῖ πρὸς θεοὺς καὶ πρὸς ἀνθρώπους διακρίσθαι. Upon which follows that famous speech, which might almost lead us to believe that Socrates had an expecta-

Nor is this expectation an unpleasing one. We admit our dependance indeed, and the pride of some may be hurt at the concession; but the far greater portion of mankind will derive from this very circumstance such conclusions as must prove highly gratifying to them. For though they might be flattered in believing that they had discovered religious truths by means of their own exertions; they would be far better pleased in having it supposed that they were the highly favoured of God, to whom he had shewn the *secrets of his wisdom*^b; to whom he had revealed himself, as to his servants of old, in dreams and in *visions of the night*^c.

pectation of a promised Saviour; for when Alcibiades says, Ποτε ουν παρεσαι ὁ χρόνος οὗτος, ὦ Σωκράτης; καὶ τις ὁ παιδεύων; ἤδιστα γὰρ ἀν μοι δοκῶ ἰδεῖν τούτον τὸν ἀνδρῶπων τις ἐστίν· Socrates replies, Οὗτος ἐστίν Ω ΜΕΛΕΙ ΠΕΡΙ ΣΟΥ. vol. v. p. 100. An expression which forcibly reminds us of the words of the Apostle, “ *Casting all your care on him, for He careth for you.*” ΑΥΤΩ ΜΕΛΕΙ ΠΕΡΙ ΥΜΩΝ. 1 Pet. v. 7.

^b Job xi. 6.

^c Genesis xlv. 2. There cannot be a stronger proof of the anxiety with which the mind desires supernatural communication, in points of religious difficulty, than in the instance of Lord Herbert of Cherbury. He had written his favourite book, *De Veritate*, but doubted the propriety of printing it. In this uncertainty he prayed that he might be instructed by some sign from heaven, whether it were for the honour of God to suppress, or publish it. A sign was granted, as he asserts,

We conclude then, upon reasonable grounds, that it is either an excessive pride and vanity, too curiously seeking to be *wise beyond what is written*; or else an unsanctified ambition, anxiously wishing for spiritual preeminence, which creates the first tendency towards Enthusiasm; and, when indulged, by gradually corrupting the will, matures it.

Of this we need no other proof than the very nature of the effect produced. For when the licentious and sanguinary leader of the Anabaptists asserted, that it was revealed to him that he should be king in Sion^d: or when his artful successor maintained, that he^e

asserts, which authorized him to print the work. See the circumstances related at large, with the prayer, in Lord Herbert's Life, p. 172, and Leland's View of Deistical Writers, vol. i. p. 25. ed. 1798. Leland very justly remarks, that were a person to allege, that he had received the same divine permission to publish a work in defence of Christianity, which is here claimed for a work that has a tendency to subvert it, he would be ridiculed as an Enthusiast.

^d John Bokelson, or Boccold, more usually called John of Leyden. The impieties and enormities of which this man was guilty; his reign as king of Sion in Munster; and his tragical end, may be found in Brandt's History of the Reformation, vol. i. p. 64. Mosheim's Ecclesiastical Hist. vol. ii. p. 232.

^e David George, who, upon the dispersal of the Anabaptists, after the taking of Munster, collected the remainder of the sect. He was a dark, mysterious, and artful Enthusiast. Some of his tenets were, that his doctrines rendered those of
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alone was worthy to be worshipped as the redeemer of the house of Israel : or finally, when the founder of another sect expressly declared, that she did not read the Scriptures, because they contained nothing but what she previously knew^f ; it must be evident, that their several pretensions were founded on the belief, that they possessed some superior holiness, which, raising them above their fellow-creatures, made them worthy to receive these

the Old and New Testament useless ; that he was the real Messiah ; that he was to restore the house of Israel. See Brandt's Hist. of the Reformation, vol. i. p. 75. and Ross's View of all Religions.

^f Antonia Bourignon. For the impious assertion alluded to, see the preface to *Leslie's Snake in the Grass*, vol. ii. of his works, p. 10. " I have sometimes," she says, " transiently read the New Testament ; but as soon as I began to read, I perceived in what I read, all my sentiments explained ; so that if I were to write the sentiments which I carry within me, I should compose a book like that of the New Testament : and it seeming to me that it would be useless to read what I did so sensibly possess, I left off to read." After this, could it be thought possible that one of her doctrines should be, That there is no satisfaction made for the sins of men, by the death and sufferings of Christ ? *Leslie*, ut sup. p. 8. The manner in which she describes the first Adam, whom she said the Almighty revealed to her, is as grossly indecent as it is impiously profane : (see *Broughton's Dict. of all Religions*, article *Bourignonists*,) and yet she dared to assert, " I know I cannot but speak the truth ; and also they who do not follow it, resist it." *Leslie*, as before, p. 10.

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great distinctions. Had any other conviction influenced their conduct, they must have perceived that the very nature of their assertions proved their absurdity.

But it is the peculiar character of pride that it knoweth no bounds. To use the figurative language of the Prophet, it *enlargeth its desires as hell*^s; so that the heart of man, when fully under its dominion, will often become credulous as to the probability of attaining preeminence, in proportion to the greatness of that preeminence which is made the object of his desire.

And here, lest the cause assigned should be thought inadequate to the effect, it may be proper to remark, that certainly there is no passion, that influences human conduct more powerfully than pride. 'Tis true, that language cannot even duly describe the insignificance of the creature, when compared with

^s "Yea also, he is a proud man, neither keepeth he at home, (i. e. *within his proper bounds*); he enlargeth his desire as hell, "and is as death, and cannot be satisfied." Habakkuk ii. 5. It is a remarkable instance of the unmeasurable folly, as well as daringness of pride, that Vanini used to say of himself, *Aut Deus loquitur, aut Vanini*. And yet this man was burnt for openly professing and teaching, that there was no God. See his life and blaspheming death, *Bayle's Dict. Art. Vanini*.

the majesty of the Creator: but it is also true, that whatever opposition has been made to his will, or whatever shape that opposition has assumed, still pride has been the principle from which it has proceeded. Was it not pride, that caused the disobedience of Angels^h? was it not pride, that occasioned the fall of Manⁱ? was it not pride, that stimulated Cain to slay his righteous brother^k? was it not pride, that scattered abroad the nations over the face of the earth^l? and, finally, was it not pride, that made the incredulous Jew reject, to his own destruction, the humble appearing of his great God and Saviour?

Pride is indeed that passion, which is not only the most universal, but the most deeply rooted in the mind of man: it is that passion, which is the soonest excited, and the last subdued; that passion, which perhaps is never

^h Isaiah xiv. 12, 13. Jude 6. "It was the sin of pride, as divines generally believe, that ruined a multitude of the Angelic Host. Those once most glorious spirits, walking upon the battlements of Heaven, grew dizzy with their own greatness, and fell down into a state of utter darkness, and extreme misery." *Bp. Bull's Sermons*, vol. i. p. 210.

ⁱ Gen. iii. 5, 6. See *Bp. Bull's Sermons*, vol. iii. p. 1086. et seq.

^k Genesis iv. 4 5. See *Raleigh's Hist. of the World*, Book I. ch. v. sect. 1.

^l Genesis xi. 4.

eradicated, but which, disguising itself under the most specious appearances that self-love can assume, lurks unperceived in the secret folds of the heart, and often betrays our virtue, when every other mode of seduction would have failed.

But a difficulty may here be started, which it becomes us to obviate.

If pride be indeed the cause of Enthusiasm, seeing that this passion is universal in the human mind, why is not the effect more universally produced?

To this we reply; that though it be granted that the principle, or seed as it were, of Enthusiasm do actually exist in our hearts, it does not follow that therefore it must be developed. There are many men who have a propensity to anger, ambition, intemperance, or pride, though they never evince it outwardly by their actions. For should it happen, the mercy of God's Providence, that they never meet with such trials, as would call these passions forth, they cannot be supposed to operate: or again, should they not be excited until Religion shall have supplied the means of resisting them, they may then be repressed. Exactly so in the present instance, if we are never thrown into such situations as would
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lead us to Enthusiasm; or if we fall into them at that period of life, when a just and comprehensive view of the nature of revelation shall have shewn us the impropriety of expecting new illuminations, does it not follow, that we shall have little to apprehend from spiritual delusion? Besides which, of necessity much will depend on that frame of mind with which we have been endued. Some men, for instance, are so calm and moderate in their dispositions, that they seem to be wholly exempt from the dominion of fancy; others again are so meek and lowly of heart, that preeminence, admiration, and power, or whatever pride and self-conceit and ambition can suggest, appear to be rather objects of aversion, than of desire. In persons thus constituted, the principle of Enthusiasm will never be permitted so much as even to unfold. But the case is different when the alluring prospect of being thought *some great one* is suggested to such as are of a sanguine and ambitious temper; for to them, nothing that may raise them above their equals can be proposed, that will not be wished for; or wished for, that will not be judged attainable^m.

^m A fearful instance of this kind occurred among the Camisars

Should then a person of this characterⁿ persuade himself that the knowledge of divine truths is to be attained by immediate revelation, rather than by the study of Scripture, it will be easy to trace the progress of his Enthusiasm. Having once admitted the possibility of receiving some divine communication, he will naturally be led to hope for the attainment of it; but being ignorant what is the knowledge to be imparted, and what the means to be employed, great but confused expectations of holy warnings, mysterious voices, and rapturous sensations, will be for ever present to his fancy. This will be the beginning of his error; and then, having for a long time expected the desired communications in vain, by degrees he will figure to himself, what are the most proba-

misar Quakers. One of them was seen to take another by the arm, and looking at him, said, "*Do you not acknowledge me to be the eternal, unchangeable God?*" To which the other, falling down and trembling, answered, "I do acknowledge thee," &c. View of the Times, vol. iv. p. 235. as quoted by Jones in his Essay on the Church. p. 53.

ⁿ Maimonides in his *More Nevochim* has this admirable passage. One of the perfections, he says, requisite to form the character of the prophet is, that he should be eminent, "in puritate cogitationum, ab omnibus oblectationibus corporalibus; et immunitate affectuum ab omni superbia, et stultâ ac pestilenti gloriæ cupiditate." Pars ii. cap. xxxvi.

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ble; and these, though he may not be aware of the preference, will be such as are the most conformable to his wishes. Being advanced thus far, he will next indulge in the contemplation of their fancied accomplishment; and he will suffer his mind to be absorbed in the pleasure which this contemplation will impart. He will now become melancholy and recluse; the intercourses of society will be judged importunate, as they prevent him from dwelling on his favourite meditations; and these he will be drawn insensibly to pursue in such places, and at such seasons, as may serve to heighten their effect; either amid the gloom of impending night, or the horror of surrounding solitude°. In these moments he will so abstract himself, that he will even become unconscious of external impressions; and though this absence be occasioned solely by the ve-

° “ Multis rebus inflammantur tales animi, ut ii qui sono quodam vocum, et Phrygiis cantibus incitantur. Multos nemora silvæque, multos amnes aut maria commovent.” *Cicero, de Div.* lib. i. sec. 50. Enthusiasts cannot be too frequently reminded of the power which external causes possess of exciting those effects which they conceive to be supernatural. The ancients called one of their Enthusiasms, χαλκιοτυπος μανια; an Enthusiasm occasioned by the beating of cymbals. Every one knows that Mahometan Fanatics produce their Enthusiasms by violent agitations of the body. Some of our sectaries obtain, as they think, illuminations from the Holy Spirit, in the same manner.

hement intention of his mind, cooperating with the strong propensity of his inclination, he will nevertheless persuade himself that it is a supernatural rapture^P. And now heated with this persuasion, and conceiving himself to be an immediate object of divine favour, there is not any wild suggestion which he will not admit, because there is none which may not be defended under the plea of inspira-

^P Jamblichus asserts, that it is the surest evidence of divine inspiration, τεκμηριον μεγιστον, when the persons affected are insensible to external impressions, οἱ μὲν διαπειραντας οὐελας οὐκ επαιδανονται—οἱ δὲ καὶ ξιφιδιοις τας ωλενας κατατεμνοντες εδαμως κατακολεθθαι—καὶ εἰς πυρ φερονται καὶ πυρ διαπορευονται.—De Mysteriis, sec. iii. chap. iv. So Virgil; Æn. xi. v. 788.

Summe Deûm, sancti custos Soractis, Apollo,
Quem primi colimus, cui pineus ardor acervo
Pascitur : et *medium freti pietate per ignem*
Cultores multâ premimus vestigia prunâ.

It perhaps was in this latter sort of Enthusiasm, that the idolatrous Canaanite *passed through the fire, when he used divinations*: Deut. xviii. 10, 11. and probably it was in the former that the priests of Baal deluded the Israelites: 1 Kings xviii. 28. But it is manifest from experience, that this sort of insensibility may be, at any time, produced by the mere powers of attention. The American savage, by fixing *his attention* on the hatred he bears his enemies, supports without a groan the most excruciating pain: and an Italian criminal, by voluntarily representing to himself the gibbet, and strengthening the representation by frequently calling out, *I see it*, sustained the torture without confessing his crime. *Crighton, on Mental Derangement*, vol. i. p. 259.

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tion. The farther his conceits are removed from human probability, or common experience, the more they will be considered as proper subjects for revelation: and, finally, having deliberately excluded every appeal to reason, by prejudging it incompetent to decide in his peculiar case, he will perpetuate his delusion, by depriving himself of the only means by which it might be detected ^a.

Such probably, with little variation, is the gradual progress of delusion in the mind of the Enthusiast: and from the very circumstance of its being thus gradual, we draw a strong presumptive proof of the truth of our conclusions. Could it be shewn, as some have imagined, that Enthusiasm rushes suddenly upon us; in a single moment overpowering our faculties, and subjugating our reason; then the whole question would assume a different appearance. But when it can be established by a variety of examples, that it is the growth of many years; insomuch that it might be almost necessary to complete the definition of Enthusiasm, that it should be

^a See Campbell's Authenticity of the Gospel History, sect. xviii. where he treats this subject at large, and establishes the same conclusions.

*slowly progressive*¹; what argument can be adduced to prove that it is not, as we have stated it to be, a delusion, which is to be referred to the inordinate action of the imagination, and to the perversity of the will?

That the assent of the understanding is indeed dependant on the will, is fully attested by the evidence of Scripture. If the Apostle warns his converts, that their departure from the *truth proceed not from an evil heart of unbelief*²; does it not follow that there was in their hearts a power to influence their faith? Or if it be foretold of the Jews, that they will not be converted, *until the vail be removed from*

¹ It might be unnecessary to select any one particular example to establish this position, as perhaps not a single exception can be met with to oppose it. Some indeed have not been betrayed into any violent acts of Enthusiasm till late in life: but then, generally speaking, its existence may be traced even in their infancy. For they almost always refer to some impression made on their minds at that early period; to some dream, or vision, or providential preservation, which they afterwards considered as a proof, that they were destined to become the appointed instruments of God's extraordinary dispensations. The reader however may refer to the life of St. Teresa: Butler's *Lives of the Saints*, vol. x. p. 325. She relates herself, that, when seven years old, she actually set out with her little brother on foot, to go to the country of the Moors, in the hopes of dying for the faith.

² Hebrews iii. 12.

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their hearts ^t; must we not conclude, that their acceptance of the Gospel depends upon their renouncing those wilful prejudices, which have hitherto prevented their receiving a spiritual King?

Yet even these proofs were needless, could we but consent to consider impartially what passes within us. Much as we may wish to conceal it from ourselves, hourly do we betray our reason to our inclinations. Whatever is the object of our hope, that, generally speaking, becomes the object of our faith. What but this can be the cause (to instance no other example) why Christians of the same communion regard in such a different light the doctrine of a future state? Is it not that he, who has made the attainment of things eternal the real object of his desire, will behold them, though they be yet invisible, with the piercing eye of faith? Is it not that, trusting in God's promises, he concludes their existence to be no less certain, than that of the material objects which surround him? Whilst, on the other hand, he who has risked every thing on the foolish venture of present

^t 2 Cor. iii. 14, 15, 16. The words of the Apostle are very striking. "But even unto this day when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart; nevertheless, when it (*their heart*) shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away."

enjoyment, finding that he cannot look forward to a future state with the confidence of Christian hope, first questions its reality, and then denies it^u.

And now, the different conclusions we have established being summed up together, let us observe what must be the amount.

We have shewn that passions, such as pride and ambition, are able in a vehement manner to call forth the powers of the imagination : we have shewn that the imagination, when thus excited, will often suggest to the mind the conceit of divine illumination : we have shewn also, that if the will be disposed to cooperate, such suggestions are not only believed, but even with the utmost pertinacity defended. Now, as it is the union of these three particulars that constitutes

^u “ Infidelity and faith look both through the same perspective glass ; but at contrary ends. Infidelity looks through the wrong end of the glass, and therefore sees those objects which are near, afar off ; and makes great things little, diminishing the greatest spiritual blessings, and removing far from them threatened evils. Faith looks at the right end, and brings the blessings that are far off in time, close to our eye. That this dissolved body shall be raised out of the dust, and enlived with this very soul, wherewith it is now animated, and both of them put in a condition eternally glorious ; is as clearly represented to my soul in this glass, as if it were already done. Faithful is he that hath promised, which will also do it.” *Bp. Hall's Works*, vol. iii. p. 712.

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Enthusiasm, we need no further evidence to prove that it is eminently one of those spirits, which cometh not from God.

Such are the reasons upon which we ground the necessity of rejecting Enthusiasm, as well in its secondary, as in its primary signification. We need only remark further, that, when applied to Religion, the effect produced by either is equally prejudicial. It might seem indeed that the suggestions of the Evil One would be more immediately repugnant to the pure counsels of the Almighty. But if we reflect what absurdities and impieties human ignorance, and human folly, mixed with carnal pride and ambition will produce, when the restraint of reason has been wilfully withdrawn; we must allow that Christianity can have little cause to rejoice, whether our delusion be owing to the malice of Satan, or to the licence of a perverted imagination. In both cases the attendant evils are innumerable. Whatever be the source from whence the torrent spring, its final issue is the same; it must hurry us into the wild and tumultuous ocean of uncertainty; on which having been awhile *tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine*^x, we shall probably make

^x Ephes. iv. 14.

shipwreck of our Faith^y; and as we sink into eternity, find perhaps our last struggle embittered by this reflection, that in our own ruin we have involved the spiritual welfare of many, who otherwise might have stood fast in the truth, blameless, and harmless, the Sons of God, without rebuke^z.

Having thus shewn the causes from which Religious Enthusiasm is derived, it would prove a circumstance of the deepest regret, could it be imagined that any thing here advanced, reflects, even in the slightest degree, on that fervour in the contemplation of heavenly objects, and in the performance of religious duties, which is necessary to the perfection of Christian piety.

It was to guard against this perversion, that our terms were at the first so studiously defined, and have since been so cautiously applied. Yet for fear the distinction may not have been clearly understood, in the sacredness of truth I once more declare, that it never was designed to hold up to censure the fervour of the pious; or expose to the sneer of scorn that zeal, which marks the devotion of the pure in heart. God forbid!

There are situations under which the soul

^y 1 Tim. i. 19.

^z Phil. ii. 15.

of man cannot remain unmoved. If an investigation of the laws by which the œconomy of the natural world is regulated, is said to have impressed with such awe the mind of one of our greatest philosophers, that he could never mention the name of its Almighty Author^a, without religious dread; the contemplation of a far more stupendous system, the love of God manifested in Jesus Christ, cannot but affect the heart, when it is the subject of our meditation; cannot but animate the tongue, when it is the theme of our praise.

And yet further. If a mere abstract contemplation of the wonders of the Christian dispensation can produce these effects upon the soul; are we not reasonably to conclude, that their impression will become still more lively, when its efficacy is feelingly applied to our wants, and when, amidst all our fear and trembling, it has given us the consolatory assurance, that *it is the power of God unto salvation*^b?

This it was that raised so high the devotion of our great Reformers. For when,

^a The celebrated Mr. Boyle: the same thing has been related also of Sir Isaac Newton.

^b Rom. i. 16.

awakening from the slumber of papal delusion, they found the pure beam of Gospel Truth, bright as the Sun at noon-day, break suddenly upon them; amazed to think that they should obtain such favour, whilst others were suffered to remain in darkness, how could they do less than employ a language, fervent as the gratitude they felt?

This too was the cause, which, in a still more eminent degree, infused into the bosom of St. Paul such sentiments of love and adoration. For reflecting that he, who was once a *vessel of wrath*, had been selected, of free grace, to become a *vessel of honour*; and moreover that he had been even admitted to a nearer contemplation of that glory, which *was laid up in store for him when his course should be finished*^d; was it not natural that he should break forth into those rapturous expressions which characterize his sacred page; labouring as it were for words to describe the *unsearchable riches of the mercy of Christ, in whom, through his blood, he had obtained forgiveness of sin*^e.

^d 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.

^e Ephes. i. 7. This love of God, this admiration of his goodness, this warm enunciation of his praise, is perhaps in no part of St. Paul's writings more conspicuous, than in his letter to the Ephesians. But whilst in reading that Epistle the
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If then these distinguished personages were thus affected with the knowledge of Divine goodness : if a conviction of God's never failing providence made Daniel *pray, and give thanks as aforetime*^f; though this exercise of piety involved the loss of life : if David declared, that his soul *thirsted for God*^g: if they who surround his throne in heaven *cease not day and night from saying, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty*^h; we, who experience his love in the means of present grace, and hope to derive from it the enjoyment of future glory, may well be expected to feel an holy warmth in the exercise of our devotions.

But as none of those holy men, whose lives are recorded for our example, were, in the definite meaning of the word, Enthusiasts; we cannot too carefully distinguish between the principle which directed them, and that which

pious Christian feels his heart burn within him, he would do well to remark, that not a single word of it is conceived in the spirit of Enthusiasm. It is not his own peculiar privilege or hope, but the knowledge that salvation was extended to all mankind, that seems to have moved St. Paul to such an holy rapture. “ *God having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself, to gather together in One, all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth.*” Chap. i. 9, 10.

^f Dan. vi. 10.

^g Psalm xlii. 2.

^h Revel. iv. 8.

governs the visionary fanatic. What then is the character of that Spirit which cometh from God? Truly its fruit is *love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance*ⁱ. Whereas the spirit which proceedeth from delusion is always inconsistent with itself; it hurries the distracted mind we know not whither; it engenders the bitterness of strife, contracts the heart, and substitutes a gloomy train of needless austerities for the tender and amiable charities of Christian Life.

And such being the real properties of Enthusiasm, how can we understand that plea of sincerity which is urged so frequently in its behalf? Can any sincerity authorize us to engage in an undertaking, if it can be shewn that the consequences of this undertaking are hurtful, and that the principle on which it proceeds is mere delusion? Surely no one can be so bold as to assert, that the quality of our pursuits, be they good or be they evil, is a matter of indifference, so long as we engage in them with sincerity. This would be effectually to subvert all virtue, and all perfection; and yet something of this nature seems to be implied in the argument above adduced^k.

ⁱ Galat. v. 22.

^k It was by this notion of sincerity, that Bishop Hoadly fur-

But in fact, before the plea of sincerity is urged, the term should be defined: we cannot assent to a proposition, the premises of which are vague. To what does the word apply? Does it refer to the nature of the object; or to the intentions of him who pursues it? Again, are these to be judged of by the preconceptions of the individual; or by the invariable rule of right? Till these previous steps are taken, how can it be known what is even meant by those who defend Enthusiasts, *because it is their character to be always sincere?*

That Enthusiasts are sincere in believing their illuminations to be divine, was never questioned; "if they did not think them-

furnished an argument which might have tended to subvert the Established Church. *If you are secure of your integrity before God; that is, if you believe what you say you believe, it is no matter what Church you are of, the rest is a mere dream.* See *W. Law's first Letter to Bishop Hoadly*, as reprinted in the *Scholar Armed*, p. 330. The sentiments which St. Paul entertained were far different. His *sincerity* in adhering to the Jewish Church, and in persecuting the Christian, could not be doubted: but so little did he think that this plea excused his previous conduct, that even after he had obtained mercy, he charged himself with having been a *blasphemer, and a persecutor*. 1 Tim. i. 13. "Nay," said he, "*I am the least of the Apostles, that am not meet to be called an Apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God.*" 1 Cor. xv. 9.

"selves

“ selves inspired, they were not Enthusiasts¹”. But this is a praise which they share in common with the wildest maniac; for he sincerely believes the vision that plays upon his fancy to be real. This then is not the question: what we are to enquire is, whether they are sincere in endeavouring to ascertain the nature of that evidence, upon which their illumination is believed. The point therefore on which the whole enquiry must turn, is the sincerity of their love of truth, as far at least as it applies to their peculiar case. For it has been admirably well remarked, “ that
 “ the love of truth can never lead us to be-
 “ lieve more than the proof in favour of any
 “ question can establish^m.” Admitting then this principle, (and surely it is incontrovert-

¹ H. More’s divine Dialogues, p. 469. See also his *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus*; in which the question of Enthusiasm is ably handled.

^m Locke, on the Human Understanding, “ The evidence that
 “ any proposition is true (except such as are self-evident) lying
 “ only in the proofs a man has of it, whatever degrees of as-
 “ sent he affords it, beyond the degrees of that evidence, it is
 “ plain, all that surplussage of assurance is owing to some other
 “ affection, and not to the love of truth: it being as impos-
 “ sible that the love of truth should carry my assent above the
 “ evidence to me that it is true, as that the love of truth
 “ should make me assent to any proposition for the sake of that
 “ evidence which it has not—&c.” Book IV. c. xix. sec. 1.

ible) how can a belief in imaginary inspirations be reconcileable to a real love of truth? Are not the Scriptures, from which the Enthusiast draws the arguments that support his pretensions, the very test by which their fallacy is detected?

Be it remembered however, that the plea of sincerity, even were it granted, could apply only to the motives, not to the actions of the Enthusiast; it might serve to extenuate, but not to sanction, criminality. Admit then that such a person having exerted his reason to the utmost, nevertheless believes that the authority upon which he acts is really divine. In this case it is evident that the question resolves itself into two distinct particulars. What final sentence will be passed upon those actions which resulted from his error, whether of acquittal, or of condemnation; of censure, or of praise, will be determined by that All-wise Being, who alone can know what were his intentions, and what his means of ascertaining truth. But as far as the present is concerned, if he violate any law, we must insist that his sincerity exempts him from no blame, and should screen him from no punishment.

Surely the religious Enthusiast ought not to forget, or if he does we cannot, that many fanatics, acting upon the same principle
with

with himself, have broken those laws which are esteemed the most sacred in society. Their defence has been uniformly the same; that God had called upon them to remove from the state such individuals, as, they thought, were inimical to its interestsⁿ. Yet this plea was never allowed: nor was it for one moment debated, whether any member of a civil community was at liberty, upon the strength of his own convictions, to break through those restraints which had been wisely established for its preservation. For could such a notion as this be once admitted, soon would the passions of mankind, freeing themselves from all control, destroy the order of society, and the well-being of the world.

If then we do not suffer the plea of sincerity to exculpate the Enthusiast when he violates those laws which are of human ordinance; it is no small part of Christian duty to insist, that the same plea should never exculpate him when he violates such as are divine. And this

ⁿ See the trial of Ravillac for the murder of Henry IV. The same defence was made by Gen. Harrison: "As to the blood of the King (Charles I.) I have not in the least any guilt laying upon me; for I have many a time sought the Lord with tears, to know if I have done amiss; in it but was rather confirmed that the thing was more of God than of men." *Trial of the Regicides*, part ii. p. 2.

the rather, because God may be considered as having intrusted to our care the *lively oracles of his Word*. He forbears visibly to interfere in their defence, that he may prove our fidelity; and having forewarned us, that he will take away from the Book of Life the name of that man, who shall corrupt a single Book of Prophecy, either by adding one word to its contents, or by taking one away^o; surely we must infer that something is to be apprehended by those who, from wilful error, shall be found to have perverted the whole tenor of Scripture.

Here then let the present enquiry be closed; and having proved that Enthusiasm is nothing more than a natural effect produced by the force of the imagination, we submit it to every rational being, whether we can in safety refer to it for those principles on which our everlasting happiness depends. The conclusion is too obvious to admit of any hesitation. Certainly we cannot. When therefore we seek after instruction in *the mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven*^p, we are to view the written word of Scripture as the only source from which that instruction is to be

^o Revel. xxii. 19.

^p Matt. xiii. 11.

derived^a: and for the understanding that written word, we are to apply, by the assistance of Grace, to the appointed means of human industry and learning; forming no opinions, and entertaining no expectations, unless the evidence whereon they rest be such as shall receive the fullest sanction of our reason.

In assigning this high office to reason, and in attributing so much to its decisions, I cannot be suspected, I hope, of wishing to exalt its powers above what Revelation justifies. I know that the *natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God*^t. I know that the pride of human intellect is not only *foolishness*, but *abomination*^s, with the Almighty. I know that our great Teacher has assured us, and to his words may be attributed the most extensive meaning, that *without Him we can do nothing*^t.

But while we allow that we are not *sufficient of ourselves* to think *any thing as of ourselves*; and while with gratitude we refer *all our sufficiency to God*^u, we are not to conclude,

^a "I have more understanding than my teachers," said David, "because thy testimonies are my study." Psalm cxix. 99.

^r 1 Cor. ii. 14.

^s 1 Cor. iii. 19. Luke xvi. 15.

^t John xv. 5.

^u 2 Cor. iii. 5. Many just observations concerning the use of

that the acquirement of religious knowledge does not depend, in some degree, upon the proper exercise of reason. If our Saviour in his parting hours could console his disciples with the promise of a *Comforter*, who should enable them to comprehend the truth^x; and if it be the exclusive privilege of the Christian dispensation, that it reveals to us an Holy Ghost, whose gracious office it is, to enlighten the understanding, we have sufficient ground to argue, that the understanding was thus enlightened, purposely that it might ascertain the evidences whereon to build our faith^y.

of Reason in points of Faith, will be found in a tract on that subject, by J. Norris; reprinted in the Scholar Armed. Much may be learned also from Rotheram's Essay on Faith: but still more from a proper study of Bp. Butler's great work, on the Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed.

^x John xiv. 15. et seq.

^y Lord Bacon noted in his time "this deficiency; that there hath not been, to my understanding, sufficiently inquired and handled the true limits and use of reason in spiritual things, as a kind of divine dialectic: which for that it is not done, it seemeth to me a thing usual, by pretext of true conceiving that which is revealed, to search and to mine into that which is not revealed: and by pretext of enucleating inferencies, and contradictories, to examine that which is positive." *Advancement of Learning*, Book II. vol. i. p. 125. 4to. ed. 1765. The same deficiency might perhaps still be noted: and were it supplied by a work undertaken and executed in the spirit of meekness and of truth, it might prove highly useful in the present times.

Not but that this privilege, when exercised in its fullest extent, is of necessity restrained within very narrow bounds. Though permitted to investigate the things which be of God, we are not to sit in judgment on the fitness of the truths he has revealed; much less are we to take upon ourselves to give a sanction to their expediency, before they are received as articles of faith: we are simply to weigh the evidence on which they are proposed to our acceptance. Should we once quit this narrow path, our reason will unavoidably be lost “in conjectures, which cannot here be ascertained, and in doubts impossible to be solved^{*} :” but, when confined to its proper sphere, the due exercise of its powers will promote, as was designed, the Glory of God.

How indeed that Glory can receive an increase from any thing that man can do, is a question too vast for human intellect to comprehend. But if the Scriptures assure us, that it will be promoted by our faith, we may humbly infer that this faith must result from the full and voluntary assent of the understanding. Instead therefore of separating these two principles; instead of making faith

^{*} See Dr. Johnson’s admirable prayer “*against inquisitive and perplexing thoughts.*” Prayers and Med. p. 216.

to be wholly independent of reason, and unconnected with it, it becomes us to argue that the exercise of reason is necessary towards the perfection of faith ^y.

For did we build our faith upon no other ground than the vague impulse of feeling, no doubt we might at first receive the word with gladness; but there could be no reasonable hope that subsequent trials and temptations might not induce us to fall away. When however the faith which we profess is founded on evidences such as reason, the more it is consulted, so much the more approves; we must indulge an holy confidence, that there never can be wanting, even amid the severest trials, faithful witnesses, who both shall honour and advance the cause of truth. For the rational part of man once fully convinced, the examples will very seldom occur, in which even the extremity of human persecution will have

^y “ Unreasonableness, or the smothering and extinguishing
“ the candle of God within us, is no piece of Religion, nor advantage-
“ vantageous to it. That certainly will not raise men up to
“ God, which sinks them below men. There had never been
“ such an apostasy from religion, nor had such a mystery of
“ iniquity (full of deceivableness and imposture) been revealed
“ and wrought so powerfully in the souls of some men, had
“ there not first come an *apostasy from sober reason*; had there
“ not first been a falling away and departure from natural
“ truth.” *Smith's Select Discourses*, p. 448.

power to make us waver in our profession : so that we may apply to ourselves, I hope without an improper confidence. the emphatic words of St. Paul, who declares, *that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*^y. A constancy of this exalted nature must extort from her very enemies this praise at least, in favour of Christianity, that her influence over the human mind is founded, not on the sandy basis of imaginary inspirations, but on that firm, that immovable rock, the calm assent of an enlightened understanding^z.

^y Rom. viii. 38, 39.

^z It may be questioned, whether the temporary apostasy of such a person as Cranmer did not advance, rather than retard, the progress of our Reformation. Many had objected, that the constancy, with which our first Martyrs died, proceeded more from obstinacy and indifference to life, than from any rational conviction of the goodness of their cause. But when they found that Cranmer was so grieved in his conscience for having renounced his faith, that (as the simple Historian of the times relates) “ a man might have seen the very image and shape of
“ lively sorrow expressed in him ; one while lifting up his hands
“ and eyes unto Heaven, and then again for shame letting them
“ down to the Earth ;” (*Fox*, p. 1886.) and when they afterwards heard him declare, that he would willingly be burned, rather than continue to deny the truth ; they could not but al-

low

low that his conduct was influenced by sober conviction, and not by fanaticism. Lord Shaftesbury indeed scruples not to call our Reformers Enthusiasts : but as that *scorner* adduces no proof of his assertion ; as he does not even describe wherein their Enthusiasm consisted, his *scoffing* need not be regarded. Who is there that could have witnessed the behaviour of Ridley in his last moments, and would have called him an Enthusiast ? Seeing the venerable Latimer descending to the stake, “ he ran to him “ with a wondrous cheerful look, he embraced him, he kissed “ him, he comforted him, saying ; Be of good heart, brother ; for “ God will either assuage the fury of the flame, or give us “ strength to abide it.” (*Fox*, p. 1769.) Are these the actions, or the sentiments of a fanatic ? Are they not rather those of a calm, collected, rational believer, whose trust in God was founded on a principle more steadfast than the impulses of feeling ? He knew *Who* had promised of old, “ *I will never leave thee,* “ *nor forsake thee ; so that he might boldly say, The Lord will be* “ *my helper.*” (Heb. xiii. 5. 6.) Nor was he disappointed. He was enabled to suffer with such meekness, charity, and resolution, that many who came to feast their eyes on the death of him, whom till then they had considered as an Enthusiast. and an Heretic, went away from the inhuman spectacle, converts to those very opinions, the truth of which that Martyr had maintained with such religious constancy. See *Ridley's Life of Ridley*, p. 670.

SERMON II.

LUKE xvii. 1, 2, 3.

THEN SAID HE UNTO THE DISCIPLES, IT IS IM-
POSSIBLE BUT THAT OFFENCES WILL COME;
BUT WOE UNTO HIM THROUGH WHOM THEY
COME!

IT WERE BETTER FOR HIM THAT A MILL-
STONE WERE HANGED ABOUT HIS NECK,
AND HE CAST INTO THE SEA, THAN THAT
HE SHOULD OFFEND ONE OF THESE LITTLE
ONES.

TAKE HEED TO YOURSELVES——.

THESE words of our blessed Saviour are
such as ought to fill the mind with awe and
apprehension. For when we observe the un-
usual severity with which they are delivered,
we cannot but infer that the offences here
spoken of are of a nature peculiarly sinful.
If however we consider the proper meaning
of the term employed; and if we remark,
that the consequence which is said to follow
these offences is the scandalizing of the little
ones

ones in Christ, we must conclude, that they are not those transgressions which proceed from the indulgence of unlawful appetite.

Tremendous indeed are the effects, which result from the gratification of the lusts of the flesh ! But though the carnal sinner will, generally speaking, be found to have extended disgrace and misery to others ; nay, though his guilt may even have entailed both shame and sorrow on his unoffending posterity ; yet there is reason to suppose that his particular offences are not here the subject of our Saviour's reprehension.

We must assign then some more extensive signification to the words of our text. And if we consider the occasion on which it was delivered ; if we compare it also with the words of another Evangelist^a ; we cannot reasonably doubt, but that the offences foretold relate to those stumbling-blocks, which would be thrown in the way of Christianity, by the arrogance of human pride, or the perversity of the human will^b. To these offences we

^a Matt. xviii. 1. et seq. Compare also Mark ix. 42.

^b Σκανδαλον, “ est omne quod efficit et occasionem præbet, ut aliquis desciscat à Religione Christianâ.” See *Schleusner's Lexicon*, v. ii. p. 793. where it is shewn that the word originally means, *That, which being placed in the way of any one, may cause him to fall.* Thus Levit. xix. 14. “Thou shalt not put a stumbling-block

seem justified in applying the severest denunciations of future wrath. For though persons who have indulged the habit of lightly regarding religion, may not immediately feel the force of the reflection, yet nothing is more true, than that it is the height of criminality to prevent the well-disposed from embracing the Gospel ; or so to scandalize the young believer, as that he shall be led to renounce the hope of his calling. These then are the offences of which our Saviour speaks. And when we reflect what it is to make *the*

“ block before the blind ;” *απειραυτι τυφλου ου προσδησεις σκανδαλον.* The distinction between this offence, and such as are of a carnal nature, is strongly marked in Matt. xiii. 41. “ The Son of Man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom *all things that offend, (παντα τα σκανδαλα)* and *them which do iniquity. (και τες ποιεντας την ανομιαν.)*” Grotius observes on this passage, that our Saviour is speaking of “ duo hominum vitioforum genera ; alii prava docentes, alii puram professionem vitâ turpi dehonestantes. Prioris generis homines *σκανδαλα* hic vocantur. *Op. Theol.* v. ii. p. 141. It is necessary to observe further, that the *perishing*, which is said to be the consequence of the above offence, is to be understood either of the refusing to embrace the Faith, or of the apostatizing from it. Thus Grotius, *απολειται*, “ paulatim definit esse Christianus.” *Vid.* in 1 Cor. viii. 11. So in Matt. xviii. 14. *απολεισθαι*, *perire*, hic est à Deo averti ; cui opponitur *σωζεσθαι.* *Op. Theol.* vol. ii. 175. and consequently *ὁ εἰς της απωλειας*, 2 Thess. ii. 3. is rendered by Schleusner, “ insignis ille impostor, qui multos ad defectionem à Christianâ Religione sollicitabit.” Vol. i. p. 294.

way of truth evil spoken of^c ; to aid as it were the powers of darkness ; to tread under foot the Son of God, counting the blood of the Covenant an unholy thing, and doing despite unto the Spirit of Grace^d ; we must allow, that if in any shape we shall have contributed to scandals, such as these, it would indeed have been good for us that we had never been born^e.

And this consideration should lead us with the most fearful anxiety to guard the mind against that spirit of Enthusiasm which was treated of in the foregoing Lecture : since if we suffer ourselves to believe in imaginary inspirations, the power and the tendency of such a belief will lead us to those very offences which have been just enumerated. Were we to grant that new Revelations are to be expected by individuals, what means shall we have left, to expose the falsehood even of the most heretical doctrines ? In vain should we afterwards attempt to refute them from the concurrent sentiments of the learned ; from the uniform testimony of past ages ; or from the express words of Scripture itself : for the Enthusiast asserting that his authority is superior to all

^c 1 Pet. ii. 2.

^d Heb. x. 29.

^e Mark xiv. 21.

these, must be permitted uncontrolled to propagate his opinions, though the most inimical to the designs, and the most contradictory to the commands of God.

This however will prove but the beginning of offences. Having framed a new doctrine, the Enthusiast will proceed to frame a new establishment. He will plead, that the same commission which entitled him to teach, will entitle him to govern. In consequence of which, he will do far worse even than the sons of Corah^f: for he will not merely arrogate the priesthood to himself, but he will frame a new one after his own conceits; he will invent strange ordinances, and will call them God's appointed means of grace: he will persuade simple ones that salvation is to be found within the limits of that fold, which he has without authority created; and, as far as human means can operate, he will destroy the Church of Christ, by violating its Unity.

It has been said indeed, that a diversity of Communion is not invariably the result of a diversity of opinion^g. But though a maxim

^f Numbers xvi. Jude 11.

^g "A mere different opinion doth not violate the bonds of Society; for, *opinionum diversitas, et opinantium unitas non sunt*

assurata.

be just in itself, yet if it be applied to cases which are not similar, we shall be led to wrong conclusions. And thus it happens in the instance before us. When the points about which men differ are confessedly of small importance; or when they are such as depend upon human judgment; then diversity of sentiment needs not create separation. But when either party conceives that the disagreement is authorized by Revelation, the breach is unavoidable. Impress men with the belief that Heaven has interfered to teach them, as essential to their salvation, doctrines on which the Established Church refuses to insist, and they will find in that belief a motive to separate, which nothing can ever counteract. Urge them with the danger of hastily breaking communion; reason with them on the sin of destroying Church Unity; and they will reply, that they are authorized to depart from ordinary rules: they will maintain that our opposition proceeds from the suggestions of worldly policy; and misapplying the words of the Apostle, they will triumphantly exclaim, “ *We ought to obey God, rather than*
“ *men* ^h .”

“ *αὐτοὶ αὐτά.* Men may preserve communion under different apprehensions.” *Bp. Stillingfleet’s Irenicum*, B. I. c. vi. sec. 2.

^h Acts v. 29.

It was in this manner that Enthusiasts, or, as they are properly styled by an eminent Divine, Worshippers of Imaginationsⁱ, began at a very early period to introduce those offences into the Church which scandalized the heathen world^k. Little doubt but that there were many serious persons among the Gentiles, who, feeling the insufficiency of Philosophy, eagerly aspired after a better and a purer light. Their attention therefore was excited by the preaching of Christianity. But when they perceived that its followers differed so much among themselves, that every city swarmed with sects, each of which contended that the true faith was to be found within its own particular pale; and when, to increase the scandal, they witnessed daily the rise of new systems, and heard talk of new revelations, each confidently pretending to be of Christ; questioning, unfortunately, the authenticity of all alike, they returned, perhaps not without reluctance, to their former idolatries.

ⁱ See Bp. Andrews's Sermon of the Worshipping of Imaginations. Sermons, Part ii. p. 25. Ed. 1641.

^k This objection, as might be expected, was urged by Celsus. His words are preserved by Origen, who answers them. Vid. Origenis Opera Ed. Benedic. vol. i. p. 454.

The same cause still contributes to perpetuate the same effect. What is more common than to hear the Deist of the present times assert, that he shall continue to walk in the light of Natural Religion, so long as the Sects and Heresies which are created by our modern Enthusiasts, make it impossible for him to ascertain to what Church obedience is due, or in what creed truth may be discovered¹?

That this mode of reasoning is inconclusive, may be readily proved. It may be proved also, that it can have no weight but with those who, having once embraced the cause of infidelity, are constantly employed in seeking for such arguments as may seem to justify their conduct. Must it not strike us however, that it is we who have supplied them

¹ "When," says Sir Walter Raleigh, "all order, discipline, and Church Government shall be left to newness of opinion, and men's fancies; soon after, as many kinds of Religions will spring up, as there are parish-churches within England; every contentious and ignorant person, clothing his fancy with *the Spirit of God*, and his imagination with *the gift of Revelation*; insomuch as when the Truth, which is but One, shall appear, to the simple multitude, no less variable than contrary to itself, the Faith of men will soon after die away by degrees, and all Religion be held in scorn and contempt." *Hist. of the World*, B. II. ch. v. sec. 1.

with these arguments, by our religious dissensions. It is true, that if they *use them for a cloke of maliciousness*^m, for this they will be accountable to God, in that day, *when He shall judge the secrets of men*ⁿ: but shall it not be laid at the same time to our charge, that we were to them a *stumbling-block, and an occasion of falling*?

O! if it might be permitted us to indulge in the reflection, what a different appearance would the world now exhibit, had men so restrained their imaginations, as not to have violated the Unity of the Church! For had Christians in all nations continued to be of one heart, and of one mind; keeping entire the sacred succession of the one appointed Ministry, and teaching uniformly the same sound precepts of Apostolic Doctrine; this Union would have afforded such an argument in favour of Christianity, as nothing could have ever gain-said: it might probably have prevented that first woe which desolated the Church^o; and certainly it would have been the cause that many of those nations, which still remain in the darkness of Pagan idolatry,

^m 1 Pet. ii. 16.

ⁿ Romans ii. 16.

^o Rev. ix. 1. to 12.

had even now been rejoicing with us, in the beams of *the Sun of Righteousness* ^p.

It appears therefore that it was not without good reason that in the beginning of this enquiry we asserted, that no Spirit had more retarded the progress of the Gospel, than that of Enthusiasm. For seeing that Schism has ever been one of the very chiefest instruments which the enemy of Christ's Kingdom has employed for its destruction; and seeing that Enthusiasm will remain, to the latest hour of time, the most abundant source of Schism; it cannot but be viewed in that light, wherein we place it.

To attempt to counteract its influence may almost seem an hopeless undertaking; for nothing can be more difficult, than to eradicate error from the mind, when once it has become inveterate. Nevertheless, as we have shewn that Enthusiasm is produced by natural causes; that is, by permitting the imagination to obscure the reason; if by any means this latter may be restored to its proper functions, the belief in imaginary inspiration would immediately cease; or, what amounts to the same thing, the Enthusiast would not dare act upon its authority in future. Now

^p Malachi iv. 2.

there are some truths in Religion so self-evident, that no one has ever yet denied them. For instance, that the Almighty cannot act in a contradictory manner; that he cannot deceive his creatures by inconsistent Revelations. If then we can shew that the conduct which Enthusiasts adopt, in consequence of those communications which they believe the Almighty has vouchsafed them, is repugnant to these very truths; they must allow, unless the use of their reason be utterly destroyed, (in which case there can be no ground for serious discussion) that those communications are imaginary. This point established, the enquiry closes. They who can acknowledge that the authority on which they act is invalid, and yet continue to act upon it, are not Enthusiasts, but Impostors.

Proceeding then on these principles, we will demonstrate that the sacredness of Church Unity is not, as some factious persons have imagined, a notion purely of political contrivance, but a duty, which, as it is grounded upon the express commands of God, must be binding upon every member of the Christian Church. The Enthusiast therefore cannot plead, that he is directed by divine inspiration to violate this unity; because that would be to assert, that the Almighty would mislead

his creatures by contradictory revelations : a supposition which, consistently with what has been just advanced, can never be admitted.

But, before we proceed further, may it be permitted us to observe, that we mean not to apply this enquiry to those, who in separating from the corruptions of the Papal See, unfortunately for the Christian world, thought themselves authorized to ordain new Ministries, and to establish unprecedented modes of Church-government. Some of these Reformers indeed were so circumstanced, as that at the time it would have been difficult to have pursued a different conduct^a: but though they did vary from the Apostolical Succession, they still acknowledged the sacredness of the principle^r; and while they

^a The preface to Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity contains a short but a masterly account of the origin of the Church at Geneva. The spirit in which he wrote those pages is truly that of Christian Charity; and is the more to be admired, when we consider, that it was the pretensions of this very Church which he unremittingly opposed. "Their device," he says, "I see not how the wisest at that time living could have bettered, if we duly consider what the present state of Geneva did then require. For their Bishop, and his Clergy, being departed, to chuse in his room any other Bishop, had been a thing altogether impossible." *Hooker's Works*, Oxford ed. vol. i. p. 133.

^r "Si qui sunt autem (quod sanè mihi non facile persuaseris)
"qui omnem Episcoporum ordinem rejiciant, absit ut quis-
"quam

beheld with veneration the irreproachable manner in which our Reformation was conducted; and while they admired the good Providence of God, which preserved among us the Episcopal order entire, they lamented that their institutions would be deprived of a requisite so essential to the Christian Church^s. Their

“quam satis sanæ mentis, furoribus illorum assentiatur.” *Beza*. Vid. Defen. Hadriani Saraviæ contra Th. Bezam, p. 2. ed. 1610. So also Calvin: “Talem nobis Hierarchiam si exhibeant, in quâ sic emineant Episcopi, ut Christo subesse non recusent: ut ab illo tanquam unico capite pendeant, et ad ipsum referantur; in quâ sic inter se fraternam societatem colant, ut non alio modo quam ejus veritate sint colligati: tum vero nullo non Anathemate dignos fatear, si qui erunt, qui non eam revereantur, summâque obedientiâ observent.” *Calvinus de Necess. Ref. Ecl.* quoted by *Durell in his Government and public Worship of God in the Reformed Churches*, 1662. p. 166. The German Divines of the Augsburg Confession said, that they were driven by the cruelty of the Popish Bishops to violate that original Church Polity which they earnestly desired to preserve. “Quam nos magnopere conservare cupiebamus.” See *Bp. Hall, Episc. by Div. Right*, Part i. sec. 3. It is remarkable that Luther urged Melancthon to restore Episcopacy in every place where the Bishop granted the free use of the Protestant doctrine. *Bp. Hall*, as above; and *Camerarius in Vit. Melancthonis*, 1655. See also *Leslie's Works*, vol. ii. p. 755.

^s When the Bishop of Landaff, at the Synod of Dort, had publicly asserted before the whole assembly the superiority of Episcopal Church Government; the President immediately arose, and said, “Alas! my Lord, we are not so happy as you are, in this particular.” *Bp. Hall, Episcopacy by Divine Right*, Book i. sec. 4. The testimony of the greatest Foreign Protestant Divines in favour of our Church is unequivocal, and striking.

subsequent conduct, indeed, in adhering to a practice, which they declared at first was irregular, and which was tolerated merely because it was provisional, will for ever expose them to censure^t; nor can we forget, that by so doing they have afforded the Romanists the only specious argument that could be found to discredit the Reformation^u. Against

Thus Diodati, speaking of the horrors of the Rebellion, “Hoc
 “unum nempe ad cumulum tantarum calamitatum deerat, ut
 “florentissima Anglia, ocellus ille Ecclesiarum; peculium
 “Christi singulare; spei melioris vexillum; splendidæ illæ Do-
 “mini caulæ; *pulcherrima Ecclesiæ facies*, suis ipsius manibus
 “conficeretur, et pedibus proteretur.” *Durell*, ut supra, p. 171.
 “Afferimus pro veris legitimisque Episcopis habendos illos de-
 “mum, quos Paulus in Epistolis ad Timotheum, et Titum de-
 “pingit. Cujusmodi in magno illo Regno Britanniarum exti-
 “tisse, atque etiam nunc superesse, subindeque eligi Episcopos,
 “non diffitemur.” *J. Lectius*, ut supra, p. 169. The sentiments of
 Beza are equally unequivocal: “Quod si nunc Anglicanæ Ec-
 “clesiæ instauratæ suorum Episcoporum, et Archiepiscoporum
 “auctoritate suffultæ perstant; (quemadmodum hoc illi nostræ
 “memoriæ contigit, ut ejus ordinis homines non tantum in-
 “signes Dei Martyres, sed etiam præstantissimos pastores, ac
 “doctores habuit) *fruatur istâ singulari Dei beneficentiâ*, quæ
 “utinam sit Illi perpetua.” *Beza cont. Had. Saraviam*, c. xviii.
Saravice Tract. Theol. p. 182.

^t See Bishop Hall's Works, vol. i. p. 514. His Episcopacy by Divine Right, Book i. sec. 5. *Durell's Gov. of the Church*, p. 121. Calvin's own Confession should be attended to. “Disciplinam, qualem habuit vetus Ecclesia, nobis deesse neque
 “nos diffitemur.” *Respons. ad Sadoletum*, Op. vol. viii. p. 108.

^u Jewell, in his Apology for the Church of England, has
 twice

these Separatists from Episcopal communion however, the arguments here offered are not directed. There is a wide difference between these and the Enthusiast who acts upon a principle subversive of all communions alike ; and who daringly, we might add even impiously, asserts, that “ religious uniformity is “ contrary to Scripture, and destructive of the “ glory of God ^x.”

Now, that Enthusiasts can persuade themselves that they are commissioned to hold such opinions as these, is principally owing to the two following causes. The one that they have formed wrong notions respecting the nature and the design of the Church ; the other, that they have never considered Schism in its scriptural sense.

When it is said, that they have formed wrong notions of the nature and design of the Church, it is meant, that they apply the word generally in that sense, which it

twice noticed and answered this objection. See Juelli Apol. as published in the Enchiridion Theol. Oxon. 1792. vol. i. p. 191. and again p. 231.

^x “ Conclude then, that if God be a rock, and his work is “ perfect ; if variety be the characteristic of all his works ; an “ attempt to establish uniformity (in Religion) is reversing “ and destroying all the Creator’s Glory.” *Kilham’s Methodist’s Monitor*, vol. ii. p. 6.

can bear only when considered in a particular point of view. Nevertheless, confirming themselves in their opinion, by the evident misconstruction of a few passages in Scripture^y, and by one or two dubious authorities of antiquity^z, they affirm, that nothing more is intended by the word Church, than the number of all those who, wherever they may be found, or in whatever manner they may worship, believe in Jesus Christ.

But though this be true, when spoken of the Church of Christ in Heaven^a, we con-

^y Such as Matt. xviii. 19, 20. and Philemon 2.

^z Tertullian, "Ubi tres, Ecclesia est, licet Laici." De Exor. Cast. Op. ed. Rigalt. p. 522. Macarius goes still further: He makes one man the Church: but his reasoning shews that he is talking of the Church in a sense altogether spiritual. *Εκκλησια λεγεται και επι πολλων, και επι μιας ψυχης: αυτη γαρ η ψυχη συναγει ολως της λογισμης, και εστι εκκλησια τω Θεω.* Homil. xii. p. 167. ed. 1559. To employ such authorities as these to sanction the opinion that the Church of Christ means nothing more than the accidental assembling of those who believe in his name, is a most unjustifiable perversion of them. It should be remembered also, that Macarius was a writer, who often dealt in allegory; and that Tertullian, when he published his work above quoted, was a follower and defender of the Enthusiastic sect of the Montanists. See the passage in question fully considered by Rigaltius, *Paradoxa Tertulliani*, 17.

^a This distinction is well treated of in *A Discourse on the Visible and Invisible Church of Christ*, by J. Rogers. He begins with this just observation: "There is no fallacy more dangerous,

ceive that the term, considered in that sense in which alone it can become an object of our discussion, is of a far more limited signification. Of the Church then we believe, that it is a visible Communion, formed by the Apostles, in the power of the Holy Ghost, and at the command of our Blessed Lord; into which all were to be admitted, who should receive the Gospel. We believe, that there are many peculiar advantages to be enjoyed by the members of this communion, which advantages will be conveyed by such ordinances as were at the first appointed. We believe too, that to administer these ordinances one, and only one, Priesthood was instituted; the different orders of which, exercising duly their separate functions, convey assuredly to us those privileges which were promised to the members of the Christian Covenant. Some latitudinarians indeed will say, that it is limiting the goodness of God to suppose that his mercies should flow through

“gerous, or by which common understandings are more apt
“to be imposed on, than when from a proposition of acknow-
“ledged truth in a restrained sense, a general and unlimited
“conclusion is inferred.” It is by not attending to this distinction, that much of that confusion is owing, which has been introduced into the Church by modern Sectaries. See Hooker’s Eccl. Polity, B. iii. sec. 1.

one particular channel only. But has he not at all times conveyed his blessings to mankind by such means exclusively, as he has appointed? Taught therefore by the Apostle, who compares the Church of Christ to the *Ark of Noah*^b, we venture to conclude, that then only shall we be entitled to the hope of covenanted blessings, when, not *flying for refuge to buildings* of our own invention, with humility we enter into that, *whose Builder and Maker is God*^c.

^b Heb. xi. 7.

^c “Surely we have ever judged the primitive Church of Christ’s time, of the Apostles and of the holy Fathers, to be the Catholic Church: Neither make we doubt to name it Noah’s Ark, Christ’s Spouse, the Pillar and Upholder of all Truth: nor yet to fix therein the whole mean of our salvation.” *Jewell’s Apologie*. See his Works, p. 389. “We believe that there is one Church of God, and that the same is Catholic and Universal—That there be divers degrees of Ministers in the Church, whereof some be Deacons, some Priests, some Bishops. Further we say, that the Minister ought lawfully, duly, and orderly to be preferred to that office of the Church of God; and that no man hath power to wrest himself into the holy Ministry at his own pleasure.” *Ibid*. p. 80, 85, 119. ed. Lat. apud Ench. Theol. p. 207, 9, 10, 257. See Potter on Church Government, Jones’s Essay on the Church; and Bishop Bilson’s excellent Work on the Perpetual Government of Christ’s Church, 4to. 1610; and Leslie on the qualifications requisite to administer the Sacraments. Works, vol. ii. p. 717. and Scholar Armed, vol. i. p. 68.

Respecting

Respecting Schism, when it was said, that Enthusiasts do not consider it in its scriptural sense, it is meant, that of the several definitions assigned to it, some are evidently formed on a partial, and some on a perverted, interpretation of the sacred writings. One teaches, for instance, that Schism is a term of party spirit and persecution : another, that the offence is ideal, or at the utmost nothing more than a departure from a particular connexion, and not the violation of any religious principle ; whilst a third maintains, that its original prohibition is both vague and inconclusive.

To minds impressed with these opinions, the charge of Schism will convey with it no idea calculated to restrain the extravagances of Enthusiasm. Who will respect a law, the violation of which is not considered to be criminal ? What inducement can we have to examine into the authority on which we act, if our actions be in themselves indifferent ? We may naturally expect therefore that one of the leading features in the character of the Enthusiast will ever be a contemptuous disregard of the Unity of the Church. And this has always been the case ^d.

^d The following words of the Heathen Philosopher are calculated

Nevertheless the very meaning of the word Schism is sufficiently strong to prove that the action cannot be indifferent. It evidently describes a wilful separation effected by violence, rending that which was before entire. Thus far we are all agreed. Observe however with what art this definition is eluded. It is suggested by some, that what is described in Scripture to be rent, is not the Unity of the Church, but merely those general ties of benevolence, which ought always to subsist between Christian Brethren: by which means Schism is made to signify nothing more than the private disagreement of individuals^e.

culated to give the Christian Sectary far more just and becoming notions concerning the nature of Schism. Εἰ ποτε εἶδες χεῖρα ἀποκεκομμένην, ἢ ποῦδα, ἢ κεφαλὴν ἀποτετμημένην, χωρὶς πᾶ ποτε ἀπὸ τοῦ λειψῆ σώματος κείμενην, τοιοῦτον ἑαυτὸν ποιεῖ, ὅσον ἐφ' ἑαυτῇ, ὃ μὴ δεῖλαν το συμβαῖνον, καὶ ἀποσχίζων ἑαυτὸν, ἢ ὃ ἀκωνανητόν τι πράσων. ἀπερῆναι πᾶ ποτε ἀπὸ τῆς κατὰ φύσιν ἐνώσεως. *Marcus Antoninus*, lib. viii. sec. 34. ed. Gatakeri, p. 250. where, in the notes, the strong resemblance, which the whole passage bears to some parts of St. Paul's writings, is pointed out.

^e It deserves to be noticed, that the *only* definition of Schism, pointed out in Lardner's Works, is one given by Faustus, a Manichean Heretic. Lardner, vol. iii. p. 538. It is no less observable, that Campbell should adduce this, as the *only* proof to support his own definition of Schism; declaring it to be *entirely scriptural*. See Campbell on the Gospels, vol. i. p. 422. In another place he says, "To partake of the same baptism, " profess

Others again attempt to weaken the expression if possible still more, by saying, that a vague, and almost an equal regard for the opinions of every sect, is that which we are forbidden to violate. In this case then we should be guilty of Schism, did we not believe that all men are equally within the pale of the Christian Covenant, whatever the nature or the origin of their Church may be.

But the very circumstances, under which these interpretations are offered, will lead us to suspect some insufficiency. They are proposed to us by persons who are conscious that they themselves do not preserve that Unity for which we contend: they are either the founders or the advocates of some new Communion. Were they therefore to admit our premises, they would confute their own pretensions. It is then only by removing the word Schism from its proper object, and by applying it to that, to which it never

“ profess the same faith, enjoy the same promises, and join in
 “ the same religious service, is a connection merely external,
 “ and of little significance, unless rooted and grounded in love.”
 p. 418. The fallacy of this position is evident. We cannot be
 surprised however that he should afterwards assert, “ that Schism
 “ in *scriptural sense* is one thing, and Schism in *ecclesiastical use*
 “ another.” p. 424.

was

was designed to apply, that they can defend their cause.

Let us however refer the question to the tribunal of Scripture. Now, there are only three places in the New Testament, in which the word Schism occurs: let us examine them, each separately; and we shall find that the obvious meaning of the term in each passage is such, as cannot authorize the interpretations above assigned to it.

In the First Epistle to the Corinthians we meet with these words: *Now I beseech you, Brethren, by the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that there be no divisions*, or, as the original expresses it, no Schisms, *among you*^e: and as we find it immediately subjoined that these Schisms consisted in the formation of religious parties, which pretended to follow one the cause of Paul, and another that of Apollos; we are to conclude, that Schism means the forming separate congregations in contradistinction to the one established Church, even though the opinions professed by these new communions should not be in themselves erroneous^f.

^e 1 Cor. i. 10.

^f It is true that some erroneous opinions had been introduced into the Corinthian Church, (it is supposed by Judaizing
Chris-

Proceeding further in the same Epistle, we find that the Corinthians actually did encourage this offence: “*I hear that there be divisions (schisms) among you^s:*” and perceiving that this charge is grounded upon the adoption of new modes in the administration of the Sacrament, which some had wantonly introduced, we are to conclude that a wilful deviation, on the part of individuals, from such forms as had been established when the Church was first founded, was considered by St. Paul to be Schism.

When also, finally, we read that the Corinthians are urged to preserve the stations assigned them severally in the Church, *that there be no Schism in the Body of Christ^h*, we infer, that some subordination of teaching, ministering, and governing, was originally appointed, and that in the violation of this order likewise the offence of Schism consisted.

Christians) which St. Paul, in the course of the Epistle, reproves. These however do not appear to have been in any shape the cause of the Schisms above mentioned. “*li qui se Paulinos, et Apollonios, nominabant, de præcipuis doctrinæ Christianæ capitibus inter se consensisse videntur, licet hætenus diffident, ut isti Paulum, hi Apollo præferrent.*” *Rosenmüller*, in 1 Cor. iii. 4. See Whitby, and Grotius.

^s 1 Cor. xi. 18.

^h 1 Cor. xii. 25.

Such are the three passages in question ; and that we may be certain that we are not deceiving ourselves as to their application, let us remember that the avowed intention of St. Paul in writing the above Epistle was expressly to obviate that very evil which we understand by the word Schism. It was to persuade all the Christians at Corinth, *to be perfectly joined together in one body ; for it hath been declared unto me* (says St. Paul) *that there are contentions among you*ⁱ.

Confirmed in our opinion then by these corroborating testimonies, we define Schism to be an open violation of Church Unity, when individuals assume to themselves the power either of forming new Communions ; or of instituting new rites ; or of creating a

ⁱ 1 Cor. i. 11. In the three above quoted passages the word in the original is *σχισμα*. The word occurs again Matth. ix. 16. Mark ii. 21. John vii. 43. ix. 16. and x. 19. and its verb, *σχίζω*, is found Matth. xxvii. 51. Mark i. 10. xv. 38. Luke v. 36. xxiii. 45. John xix. 24. xxi. 11. Acts xiv. 4. xxiii. 7. But in all these last-mentioned places it is used in a general sense, as applicable to indifferent objects. Grotius says that *σχισμα* in the three first cited passages does not describe merely “*studiorum varietas, sed aliquid amplius ; id est, segreges notat.*” *Op. Theol.* vol. iii. p. 767. If the Epistle which Clemens wrote to the Corinthians were read with this of St. Paul, it would serve much to illustrate the arguments and the design of the Apostle.

new Ministry, in opposition to such as have been established by regular authority, as being the Ministry and the ordinances originally of Apostolic institution.

But though this conclusion may be admitted to be just, it will have no weight so long as the Enthusiast believes that Schism is in itself a thing indifferent. This is a difficulty, which we foresaw from the first, and have already alluded to. Before we can hope to produce conviction therefore, we must establish, that Schism really is a sin of that magnitude, of which we have asserted it to be.

Now the degrees of guilt attached to Schism will be in proportion to the degrees of sacredness attached to Church Unity. With this point then we must begin. And first we would observe, that if Church Unity were a thing indifferent, is it in any shape probable that St. Paul would have urged as he does the necessity of its preservation? What he thought of the impropriety of enforcing things indifferent we know; he reprobates it in the strongest manner^k. And can it be supposed, that writing with the authority of an Apostle, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, he should himself be guilty of the very fault

^k Rom. ch. xiv. and xv.

which he condemns? Would he say, *I beseech you, Brethren, by the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing*¹: would he at another time have prayed that Christians might be not only of *one mind*, but of *one mouth*^m, if this point were a matter of indifference? Let it be submitted to any rational being, whether, I will not say an inspired Apostle, but any one of common prudence, could have acted in so contradictory a manner.

It may be argued however, that, granting Schism to be not altogether indifferent, it does not therefore follow that it must be sinful. But this distinction is purely sophistical. We are not disputing about degrees of probabilities, or gradations of expediency: we are talking of obedience to positive commands; and when it shall be once allowed that obedience is enjoined, disobedience must be criminal. To think that it can afterwards remain a matter of indifference how far we obey, or whether we obey at all, is to imagine that the command was nugatory; a supposition at all times absurd, and in the present case, when our blessed Lord is the author of that command, highly irreligious.

¹ 1 Cor. i. 10.

^m Rom. xv. 6.

We will place the argument however in another point of view: it thus may serve perhaps to effect that conviction, which we wish to produce in the mind of the Enthusiast.

Let us ask him then, whether he conceives Rebellion to be a thing indifferent. No doubt he will say that it is not. And should we ask him why it is not, he will answer, because it is sinful in any individual to assume of his own authority the right of government; since this cannot be done but in opposition to those principles, which every law, both human and divine, has considered to be sacred ⁿ.

ⁿ Ταῖς συνεχεῖς πάντα, καὶ τὰ οὐρανια, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰ ἐπιγίαια.
Balsamon in Canon. Apoc. xxxiv. The sublime passage with which Hooker closes the first Book of the Eccl. Polity is perhaps so well known, that it need not be here repeated: it may be suggested however, that the whole first Book of that immortal work should be frequently and seriously studied. The great argument which may be drawn from observing that obedience to Law is necessary towards constituting perfection, in every possible object, is admirably calculated to expose the littleness of Sectarism, and to raise the soul of the sincere Christian in sentiments of love and adoration to the God of Order, and of Peace. The use which Clemens Romanus has made of this reflection, to calm the tempest of Schism, which threatened to overwhelm the Church at Corinth, is well deserving notice. Οἱ ἄνθρωποι τῇ διουκῆσει Θεοῦ σαλευόμενοι ἐν εἰρήνῃ ὑποτασσονται αὐτῷ. Ἡμεῖς τε καὶ νῦν τοῦ τεταγμένου ὑπ' αὐτοῦ δέσμου διανύσιν, μηδὲν ἀλλήλοις ἐμπυδίζοντα. Then, having shewn how

Now if the Enthusiast find no difficulty in perceiving the sinfulness of rebellion, why should he meet with any in ascertaining that of Schism? since, as there is a common analogy between all government, whether Ecclesiastical or Civil, such actions as are judged criminal against the one must be regarded in their correspondent operations, as criminal against the other.

Evidently it is on this principle that our Divines have asserted Schism to be Ecclesiastical Sedition; and Sedition, Lay-Schism°. They found, upon reflection, that what constituted the sin in either case was the same: the difference lay only in the difference of terms; they therefore interchanged them, being fearful lest a verbal distinction, which

all creation is subject to the law of order, Ταυτα παντα, he exclaims, ὁ μεγας δημιουργος και δεσποτης των ἀπαντων εν ειρηνη και ὁμονοια προσεταξεν ειναι, ενεργειων τα παντα, ἱπερεκπερισσως δε ἡμας. Ad Cor. Ep. i. sec. xx.

° “ Communion is the strength and ground of all society, “ whether sacred or civil: whosoever therefore they be that offend against the common society and friendliness of men, if “ it be in civil occasions, are guilty of Sedition and Rebellion: “ if it be by reason of Ecclesiastical difference, they are guilty “ of Schism. So that Schism is an Ecclesiastical Sedition, and “ Sedition is a Lay Schism.” *J. Hales concerning Schism.* See Bishop Stillingsfleet’s *Irenicum*, Book I. ch. vi. sec. 2. In the same manner Grotius; ἀντιλογία τε Κορ. “ *Illa erat seditio contra “ Mosen, hæc contra Christum.*” In *Judam*, ver. 11.

was

was merely arbitrary, might lead some men to suppose that there was a distinction in the quality of the offence. In doing this, they seem to have been fully sanctioned by that scriptural authority, without which this mode of reasoning might have been thought more ingenious than conclusive. For it is remarkable that not merely the first Ecclesiastical writers, but the Apostles themselves, did almost uniformly employ such terms in speaking of divisions in the Church, as are used by civil historians to describe divisions in the State. Thus the word Schism, as has been before remarked, occurs but thrice in the New Testament, and rarely in the Apostolic Fathers: but the terms *sedition*, *rebellion*, *revolt*, and even *war*^P, are substituted in its place.

^P James iv. 1. Some commentators, among whom is Grotius, refer this passage to those civil wars in which the Jews were engaged among themselves, at the time when it was supposed that the Epistle was written; but the greater number refer it to the disputes in the Church, among the Christians. So Theophylact, *φόνες και πολέμους, ὃ τῶν σωματικῶν, ἀλλὰ τῶν ψυχικῶν λέγει*. Vol. iii. p. 340. See Benson, Wolfius, and Rosenmuller in loc. and Schleusner in voc. *πολέμος*. The constant use of the words *ῥασις*, *ἔρις*, *διχοῤασιαι*, &c. in the writings of the Apostles and of the Apostolic Fathers, must have struck every body who has read them with the least attention. *Εἰ δ' ἔμε ῥασις, και ἔρις, και ὀχισματα*, says St. Clemens, *ἐκχωρῶ, ἀπειλῶ, οὐ εἰαν βουληθε' μόνον το ποιμνιον τῆ Χριστοῦ εἰρηνευετω*. 1 Ep. ad Corin. ccc. 54.

To suppose that these holy persons should have used such terms without design, would be to suppose a degree of ignorance and inaccuracy, which no one can be justified in imputing to them. We must conclude rather that they interchanged the terms with premeditation; and if they did so, this could only have been in order to direct us to measure our notions of Ecclesiastical Schism by the analogy of Civil Rebellion.

To this it will be objected, that before we argue to the sinfulness of Schism in the Church, from the analogy which it bears to Rebellion in the State, we should prove that the former always possessed an authority, as unquestionable as that which is the basis of the latter. Certainly if Church authority be ideal, as Erastus would pretend⁹;

⁹ Erastus was a Physician of the 16th century, who wrote a Book de Excommunicatione, containing seventy-five Theses, which he afterwards defended in a second Work, against Beza, called Thesium Confirmatio. In both these Works he absolutely denies that the Church has any power but that of teaching and admonishing. "*Ligare et solvere nihil aliud significant, quam Evangelium annunciare.*" Thes. 54. He asserts, that Christian Magistrates are the only judges in Ecclesiastical concerns; Thes. 74. and that they should even appoint religious ordinances. "*Josue præcepit Deus, non Eleazaro, ut secundo curaret Israelitas circumcidi—ad hujus imperium Arca Dei portabatur, et ad religionem pertinentia fiebant.*" Thes. 73.

or if, as some modern latitudinarians assert, it be nothing more than a temporary compact between Christians, who are free to invent what ceremonies, and to appoint what Ministries^r they please^r; then the above objection will be valid; and it will not only set aside our present argument, but it will even prove that Schism itself cannot, as an offence at least, exist. If however it may be shewn, first, that the Church did always possess an authority, which was invariably exercised in all such points as were the proper objects of its concern: if, secondly, it may be proved, that this authority could not have been conventional on the part of men; but that it must have been communicated from God; I hope that then it will be allowed to be of such a nature, as admits no latitude of obedience; consequently can leave no doubt as to the sinfulness of Schism.

To begin then with the latter point—Let

One of his arguments, by which he would take away all power from the Church of governing her own members in spiritual things, and confer it on Civil Magistrates, is this: that as these latter certainly have a divine permission to take away life; and as this is a greater exercise of power than excommunication, therefore they have authority to govern the Church. *Confirmatio Theſium*, p. 344. ed. 1589.

^r See South's Sermons, vol. vii. p. 75, 76.

me ask, whether it be not universally allowed, that the Christian Church is an *household*^s, over which Christ is master; and a *body*, of which he is the head^t. If this be so, must not He have granted some commission, by which his stewards were to manage that household? Must not he have supplied some power of action to those vital parts which were to direct the movements of that body? In other words, Christ having established the Church, a visible Kingdom on Earth, over which He is supreme; and having for infinitely wise purposes determined, that he would not act personally by himself; we have no alternative, but to suppose that he has delegated to his ministers such authority, as shall enable them to direct the government entrusted to their care.

Rational and even unavoidable as this conclusion should appear to be, there have not been wanting those who have disputed it: insomuch that a person of considerable talents in the last century attempted to maintain that such a delegation of authority would be to destroy the power and the rule of our

^s Matth. xxiv. 45. Eph. ii. 19. Heb. iii. 3, 4, 5, 6.

^t Eph. i. 22, 23. Coloss. i. 18. 24.

Blessed Lord himself^u. On what possible ground can this opinion be defended? Does it injure the power, does it abridge the rule of Earthly Kings, that they govern distant provinces by the agency of deputed ministers? Does it not rather raise our opinion of their greatness, that they are able to communicate so much authority to others? Or, to adduce a stronger instance, do we not know that the Almighty Creator of the Universe, having called it into being, has determined that all things in the natural world should be governed by those laws, which he at first imparted to matter; he himself *remaining unseen, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto*^x. Yet was it ever argued, that this governing by second causes was derogatory to his Omnipotence? Surely no one can make the assertion. In what manner then can it detract from our Saviour's power, that while he *sitteth at the right hand of the Majesty on high*^y, he should rule his visible Church on Earth by delegated authority? But we need not dwell on this

^u Bp. Hoadly; whose sermon, *On the Nature of the Kingdom, or Church of Christ*, occasioned what was called the Bangorian Controversy. See his Works, vol. ii. p. 402.

^x 1 Tim. vi. 16.

^y Heb. i. 3.

point. The opinions advanced by the author above alluded to were confuted at the very time of their appearance, with such consummate force of reasoning by a writer of eminent abilities, that we may hope they never will be again obtruded on the Christian World². We need only observe therefore, that unless the Church had been established by the communication of that authority for which we contend, the conduct of the Apostles, and of their immediate successors, was such as no reasonable persons can be supposed to have adopted. They found it sufficiently invidious to profess the name of Christianity; and would they have drawn down on themselves a tenfold share of persecution, in giving it the consistency of a government, unless they had received assurance from God that they should be supported in the attempt? Or granting that, as Preachers of Righteousness, they might have been received for the truth's sake; would they have been acknowledged

² The Rev. W. Law. His three Letters to Bp. Hoadly contain such a complete refutation of the positions which had been advanced, that they ought alone to have terminated that controversy; as far at least as respects the points that were agitated. Few books merit more the attention of all the members of our Communion than *this* of Mr. Law.

as governors in a new kingdom, unless that kingdom had been evidently established in power? Surely not.

Let us now examine, whether the authority of this new kingdom originated in divine communication; or whether it was nothing more than the result of human compact.

That the question may be soon decided, we will premise, that the authority, which is the subject of our present consideration, is not in the smallest degree of a temporal nature: it is one that stands wholly unconnected with such power as the Church, consistently with her divine original, may at all times receive from the state. We are speaking solely of that jurisdiction in things spiritual, which was granted as necessary to ensure to mankind those advantages, which are the immediate objects of a spiritual œconomy: such as admission into the Christian Covenant; communication of grace in the Sacraments; remission of sins, and the like. How, be it asked, how could the authority, which was able to communicate these benefits, have been derived from any human source? How could it have been the result of any human compact^a?

^a There is no point on which the adherents to Apostolical Episcopacy have uniformly insisted more, than on the difference

Moreover, is it not evident, that the effects confessedly wrought by the exercise of this authority were of such a nature, as no power of man could have produced? When Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead, could

ence between that which is essential, and that which is incidental to the ministry. The one a power unalienable, being connected with an office which could have had no authority, were it not of divine appointment; the other contingent, being such privileges as the state can either refuse, confirm, or impart. See Bp. Stillingfleet's *Irenicum*, Book i. chap. ii. sec. 9. and Chillingworth's *Apostolical Institution of Episcopacy demonstrated*; Works, p. 388. ed. 1742. The conduct therefore of those who, wishing evil to our Church, confound the above distinction, and call Episcopacy a *Tyrannical Corporation*, and its Ministers an *army of hireling Priests*, (see Robinson's *Lectures for the instruction of Catechumens*, p. 31, 32.) surely is warranted neither by reason, nor by charity. Should it happen that Episcopacy were deprived of all that support which it now enjoys from the temporal power; were its Ministers even spoiled of their proper revenues; were they ejected from national councils, and rendered in their external condition contemptible and destitute; its claims to authority in the Church of Christ would nevertheless continue exactly the same as they are at present: nor could one single argument, of all that have been here adduced, be affected by the change. Should that time ever arrive, (though we trust in God's mercy that it will not, yet if it should) then the piety, the zeal, the constancy, with which the Episcopal Clergy would adhere to the afflicted Church, would prove, that their attachment to it in the hour of its prosperity proceeded solely from the conviction, that this form of Ministry, whether persecuted, or whether exalted, is truly that which was appointed by their blessed Lord.

this

this have been in consequence of any power communicated to the Apostles by the consent of the Congregation^b? or when Elymas was smitten with blindness, could this have been the result of any compact^c? Again, did the punishment of the incestuous Corinthian bear the least affinity to that which earthly tribunals can inflict? The words of St. Paul are very remarkable on this occasion, and are directly in point. *In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my Spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, deliver him unto Satan for the destruction of his flesh^d.* Was this an exercise of authority, which either the Apostle would have commanded, or the Corinthian Church have hazarded, unless they had both been certain that it would produce the intended effect? For if no visible consequences had followed, a failure in this single instance would have exposed the pretensions of the Church to ridicule and contempt. As, however, such consequences did ensue as drove the offender to despair^e; and again, as these

^b Acts v. 1.

^c Acts xiii. 8.

^d 1 Cor. v. 5.

^e 2 Cor. ii. 5, 10. The words of St. Paul in this last verse are very striking,—“To whom ye,” that is the Church; for so he begins his Epistle, *Unto the Church of God which is at Corinth.* “To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also; for if

“I for-

were removed when the Church re-admitted him to her communion, is it not clear to demonstration, that she possessed such means, both of rewarding and punishing, as could not have been derived from any human original? Seeing then that this is evident, and seeing too that we have an assurance that every thing was done then in the *Name*, and in the *power of the Lord Jesus Christ*; from Him equally in the present moment does the Church derive that power, by which alone in its true signification, that is, as an œconomy having jurisdiction in spiritual concerns, it can subsist. Were not this position granted, we should be involved in such contradictions, as no ingenuity could explain away.

We are told, for instance, that Christ *being raised from the dead, all things are put in subjection under his feet*, and that *it is given him to be head over all things unto the Church*^f. Having then received such power, and for such a purpose, would it not be absolutely contradictory to suppose that it were not applied to that end for which it was designed?

“I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes
“forgave I it, *in the person of Christ*.” See Hicks’s Sermons,
vol. i. p. 80.

^f Heb. ii. 8. Ephes. i. 22.

But

But again; are we not conscious that there are no laws, no institutions, however wise and salutary in themselves, which will not soon lose their efficacy, unless they are supported by sufficient authority? This is so obvious, that had it happened to the Church to have remained till this moment unprovided with authority, Christians in every kingdom would doubtless agree to assign to it such as might be thought sufficient to secure permanency to the Establishment; and this would be done not from a desire of ennobling a Priesthood, or of exalting an Hierarchy, but solely from the conviction that otherwise the Church itself, as far as respected its visible existence, would soon be dissolved; that the important truths, of which it was the ark and the depositary, would become corrupted; and perhaps, in the lapse of ages, forgotten.

Is it then probable, that Christians would have exercised more prudence in the defence of their religion, than its divine Author? Or is it likely that when with such infinite care our blessed Lord had framed the building, he would neglect to provide for its preservation? These suppositions are as far removed from reason as from experience. The Angel of the Old, and the Messiah of the New Cove-

Covenant, are the same^g: and can any one believe that having so jealously guarded the government of the former dispensation, He should not with an equal, if not a greater, degree of attention secure that of the latter? The one was to be only a shadow of good things to come, and was designed to be but of a limited duration: the other was to be a Church, that should last so long as the Sun and Moon endured; and should extend the hope of Salvation, not to a single generation only, or to one peculiar people, but to the uttermost parts of the earth, and to the last that should be born of the sons of Adam.

There is one way indeed, by which these conclusions might be eluded; and that is, by supposing that the authority, which had been once communicated, had been since withdrawn. But he, who should make this assertion, would have to prove it against such an

^g Malachi iii. 1. This text is particularly referred to, because I believe that commentators of every Christian Church, nay, even of the Jewish (see Grotius in loc.) agree that the Messenger or Angel, described by the Prophet, is our blessed Lord. That the Messiah, the object of Christian adoration, was known under the title of *the Angel*; and that he was worshipped as the Jehovah of the Jewish Church, see proved by Bedford, in his *Moyer's Lectures*; and by Allix, in his *Judgment of the Jewish Church*, ed. 1699.

accumulated weight of evidence, as nothing could surmount.

The promise of divine co-operation was not made to the Apostles, as to particular individuals, but as to the representatives of the future governors of the Church: consequently it applies to all those who shall be appointed their lawful successors. *Lo, I am with you always*, said our divine Master, *even unto the end of the world*^h.

Upon the strength then of this promise, a jurisdiction was exercised by the governors of the Christian Church, not only during the life-time of the Apostles, but also uninterruptedly after their death; and this too, not by persons great and affluent, upon such as were poor and destitute, but by such as were in every other particular weak, over the mighty ones of this worldⁱ. From those

^h Matt. xxviii. 20. In the same manner, v. 19, it is said, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them, &c." Had authority to do this been given to the Apostles exclusively, none could have been baptized, except those, on whom they actually performed the ceremony. The power then must have been communicated generally. Some limitation however is of necessity implied; otherwise any person, of whatever age, sex, or condition, would have the same right to administer that sacrament with an Apostle: a supposition, which would have effectually destroyed the very notion of a priesthood.

ⁱ This argument will derive strength from considering, that the rigour which was exerted by the Church, either in approv-

days down to the present, that very same jurisdiction, with regard to its essentials at least, has been in one uniform succession maintained. There never was a period in which people have not been admitted into the kingdom of Christ, or excluded from it; have not been comforted with the assurance of pardon, or strengthened by the means of grace, through the ministry of the Christian Priesthood. Nay, even at this very time, our enquiry is not about the existence of the right to rule the Church of Christ, but about the persons with whom that right is lodged.

To found then any argument on the supposition, that the authority, once imparted, has been discontinued, is to build indeed upon the sand. If any thing be inferred from the effect that follows the exercise of that authority being less perceptible now, than formerly, we should remember, that since *Kings have become the nursing Fathers*^k of the Church, the same necessity no longer exists. We should remember too, that our want of faith in this

ing the sincerity of her converts, or in punishing such of her members as had offended, was infinitely greater before she was supported by the temporal power than after. See an account of the discipline exerted on these occasions; Bingham's *Antiquities of the Christian Church*, Book xvi. xvii. xviii. xix.

^k Isaiah xlix. 23.

particular may have induced the Almighty to withhold, what once he granted, a sensible co-operation with his ordinances. If our blessed Lord *did not many mighty works* among his countrymen, *because of their unbelief*¹, we may infer that in his Church his ordinances will not be followed by the same sensible co-operations, which attested their divine institution in the first ages of Christianity, so long as many of us are inclined to view them as nothing more than ceremonial forms ^m.

¹ Matt. xiii. 58.

^m By the sensible co-operation of God with his ordinances we mean, such visible effects as were experienced by individuals, in consequence of some act on the part of the Christian minister. For instance, when in virtue of that office he either deprived an offender of those benefits which he would have otherwise derived, from being in the bosom of the Church; or when he delivered the afflicted Christian from some evil, under which he might have chanced to labour. The instance already adduced from the Epistle to the Corinthians is a proof of the former: the directions given by St. James, v. 14, 15, 16. of the latter. Any person, who is the least acquainted with the writings of the first Christians, must have observed that this co-operation was not attached merely to the personal ministry of the Apostles. The early apologists appeal to it when arguing with their opponents, as a proof that God was with the Church; and they repeatedly call upon them to discredit the assertion, if in their power, and thus invalidate their pretensions. See Bingham ut supra, book iii. chap. iv. Origen cont. Cels. p. 321, et 769. ed. Benedic. v. i.

Sufficient has now been said to establish the several positions from which we hope to argue to the conviction of the Enthusiast.

We have shewn that Schism is the act of breaking the unity of Christian Communion, whether by forming separate independant congregations; or by inventing new ordinances in opposition to such as are duly established in the Church; or by appointing a new ministry.

We have shewn too, that Schism cannot be a thing indifferent, because it is an act of rebellion against that authority which was communicated to the Church, for this, among many other reasons, to preserve its unity.

And finally, we have established, that the authority, which the Church ever did and ever must possess, is derived from our blessed Lord, its invisible but supreme Governor.

From these conclusions, many arguments might be drawn to determine the question before us. We shall specify but two.

If the authority of the Church had been derived, as some would pretend, from the consent of the people; that authority might be possessed equally by any number of communions: but if it originates, as that venerable writer, who was the fellow-labourer of
St.

St. Paul, has declared it does, in the supreme Will of God aloneⁿ; it cannot be possessed but by those only, to whom it has been communicated; neither can it be vested in two opposite claimants. This even Enthusiasts themselves must needs allow: wherefore either their pretensions, or those of the Established Church, are unfounded. But then, as the claims which they advance have no other proof than what is drawn from their own assertions, whilst ours may be traced up to the very times of the Apostles, the presumption is so strong against them, that I see not how they can avoid acknowledging that those illuminations, which they think they have received, and on which alone they ground their right of acting, can be any thing more than the effect of delusion.

The second argument is this. The idea of unity is so intimately connected with that of the Church, as being the only external means by which its very existence can be se-

ⁿ Προδηλών εν ἡμῖν οὕτων τεταγμένων, καὶ ἐγκυφωτοῦς εἰς τὰ βάθη τῆς θείας γνώσεως, πάντα ταῖς ποιεῖν οφειλομένον, ὅσα ὁ δεσποτῆς ἐπιτελεῖν ἐκέλευσεν· κατὰ καιροὺς τεταγμένους τὰς τε προσφορὰς καὶ λειτουργίας ἐπιτελεῖσθαι, καὶ οὐκ εἴη ἡ ἀτακτως ἐκέλευσεν γίνεσθαι, ἀλλ' ὠρισμένοις καιροῖς καὶ ὥραις· πᾶς τε καὶ διὰ τινῶν ἐπιτελεῖσθαι δελεῖ, αὐτοῖς ὤρισεν τῇ ὑπερτάτῃ αὐτοῦ βουλῇ. Clemens, 1. Ep. ad Corin. cap. 40.

cured ; and the perpetual observance of this unity has been so solemnly enjoined to all who believe in Christ ; that we are authorized to conclude, that no revelation has ever yet been granted, which justifies the violation of it. *If an house be divided against itself,* said our Divine Teacher, *it cannot stand* °.

Which principle is in fact admitted by those who seem the most to oppose it. For it is observable that all Enthusiasts, however extravagant, in the first moment, their conduct may be, soon mould their opinions into some regular system : and when this is completed, they then become in their turn jealous over the members of their new communion ; using every possible means to preserve that unity in their own establishments, which they have despised in the Church. What is this but an avowal, that unity is necessary to all government, that aims at perpetuity ?

Pressed by this conclusion, some have thought to elude it by supposing that the word Church is descriptive merely of the doctrinal part of Christianity ; against which no fraud or malice of the Devil, or of man, shall ever prevail. But the inspired writers of the New Testament have employed the

° Mark iii. 25.

word in such a manner, as must needs convince us that they gave it the signification, which we have here assigned to it. St. Paul tells us, that *God hath set some in the Church, first Apostles, secondarily Prophets*^p: again, *We have no such custom, neither the Churches of God*^q: and in another place he says, *As the Lord hath called every man, so let him walk; and so ordain I, in all Churches*^r. It seems therefore that the term, whatever might be its use in some cases, was appropriated by the Apostles to denote a visible communion, the members of which “ were all built upon
“ the same rock, all professed the same faith,
“ all received the same Sacraments, all per-
“ formed the same devotion^s.”

Sensible of the force of this argument, Enthusiasts once more have recourse to that

^p 1 Cor. xii. 28.

^q 1 Cor. xi. 16.

^r 1 Cor. vii. 17.

^s Bp. Pearson on the Creed. Ox. Ed. vol. i. p. 510. So again;
“ All the Churches of God are united into one by the unity
“ of discipline and government, by virtue whereof the same
“ Christ ruleth in them all. For they have all the same pasto-
“ ral guides appointed, authorized, sanctified, and set apart by
“ the appointment of God; by the direction of the Spirit, to
“ direct and lead the people of God in the same way of salva-
“ tion: as therefore there is no Church where there is no
“ order, no ministry; so where the same order and ministry is,
“ there is the same Church.” p. 513.

confusion between the visible and the invisible Church, which has been already noticed ; and by applying what is spoken of the former to the latter, they would infer that it is in the invisible Church alone that unity is expected. In which they greatly err. Where-soever government is, there unity of obedience is required by him who framed that government, and should be paid by those who are subject to it. Which being so, who can really question whether unity is not to be as sacredly observed by those who are members of Christ's visible kingdom upon earth, as by those who are the members of his invisible kingdom in heaven ?

How then could any one have rested an argument on the above unfounded distinction ? How indeed could it ever have been seriously suggested ? The blessed company of glorified Spirits, who, clothed in white robes, and mixed with Angels, are received into the courts of Heaven ; who, admitted to the presence of their Saviour, behold him and worship him seated upon the throne, for ever and ever ; they require not any restraint to keep them uniform in their obedience ; their praises, their hymns, their adorations, will be through all eternity the same. But we, alas ! require it, we who are encompassed with the
infr-

infirmities of human nature ; who hourly become the sport of passion, and find that even the severe denunciations of God's displeasure are not sufficient to make us bow our stubborn will to his.

Surely, with such a disposition in us to rebel, there is no wisdom in weakening the influence of those commandments, by which, as it is, our obedience is hardly ever secured. It were far better to impress on our minds those awful words, with which Samuel reproved the offending King of Israel. *Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams*[†].

How then is it that the Enthusiast can remain insensible to the sinfulness of Schism ? He assures us, that his conduct is formed upon the Scriptures. Be it so. Do not those very Scriptures represent our Lord as enforcing Church Unity, in words the strongest that human language can supply ? *The glory* (that is the glorious privilege of asserting the divine commission by miracles) *the glory*, says Christ, *which Thou (O Father) gavest me, I have given them (my Apostles) that (by this means) they may be made perfect in one*[‡]. How re-

[†] 1 Sam. xv. 22. Consider attentively 1 Sam. xiii. 8. 15.

[‡] John xvii. 22, 23. Τὴν δόξαν, potestatem faciendi miracula
quæ

markable are these expressions! It should seem that no less than the very perfection of Christianity depends upon its unity. To be perfect, we must be one.

Till then it can be proved, that this solemn declaration has been made invalid, or till the following words have lost their meaning; *Neither pray I for these (my Disciples) alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word, that they all may be one*^x; till then, I say, the above passages will form an incontrovertible argument to disprove the pretensions of Enthusiasts. They will, no doubt, admit that God cannot act in opposition to himself: therefore to suppose that he should commission them to counteract his own designs; or that he should grant them a divine commission to trample under foot that unity in the Church, which his only begotten Son has established, is something so contradictory, that a belief in it cannot possibly be referred to any other cause than Enthusiastic delusion.

The only objection perhaps to be urged against the above, and indeed all our preced-

quæ gloria Christi dicitur. Grotius in loc. vid. cap. ii. 12. et xi. 40. See also Hammond in loc.

^x John xvii. 20, 21.

ing conclusions, is, that by insisting thus strongly on the sacredness of Church Unity, we shall involve in the charge of Schism, all who have at any time departed from the Apostolical succession.

Such evidently is the inference; but, as we have already declared, to enforce it upon every separatist alike is not the object of our present Lecture. We could not indeed have argued as we have done with any propriety, had we not been fully satisfied that our own cause rested on such grounds as might justify our boldness. We presume not to say that the case is free from difficulties. Far from it. We think however, that the evidences of our faith in this particular are such, as we may not be ashamed hereafter to confess, in the presence of our Lord himself.

For knowing that God did so fully approve what was done by the Apostles, for the regulation of the Church, that they were even permitted to join, as it were, their authority to his, saying, *It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us*^y; our Reformers could not but acknowledge, that whatever had been thus decreed would be binding for ever upon

^y Acts xv. 28.

the Christian Church ; and consequently, that any wilful departure from such ordinances would be Schism.

Proceeding upon this principle therefore, they excluded all novelty ; and leaving no latitude to human fancy, they confined all their enquiries to this point alone, namely, “ How was it in the beginning ? ” To ascertain this they applied to Scripture ; and as from the nature of things there were some points on which Scripture was silent, in these deficiencies they enquired what was the practice of those Churches, which were confessedly established under the eye, or during the life-time of the Apostles. This was done ; and as these Churches thus founded would of necessity become the model upon which all that were subsequent should be framed, it was argued, that those particulars, in which these succeeding Churches agreed with their prototypes, might be safely considered as conformable to the Apostolical design.

It seems not possible, that at that distance of time they could have ascertained by any other mode, what it *had seemed good to the Apostles, and to the Holy Ghost, to appoint :* and as this method led them step by step to the Episcopal form of government, we should
think

think ourselves guilty of schism, did we not make that form the foundation whereon to build our Church².

We are fully persuaded therefore, that as fine gold cometh purer from the fire, so the cause of our Establishment, the more it passeth the severe ordeal of investigation, will be found more and more to justify our adherence to it. But, though we assert our own fidelity, we presume not to judge those, who, countenanced by the solemnity of deliberate and national decisions, have thought it best to adopt a different communion. That they

² That such was the conduct of our great Reformers, and such the principles that influenced them, will surely be evident to all, who study, with the attention it deserves, the history of our Church. See Bp. Hall's Episcopacy by Divine Right, and the Preface to Bilson's Perpetual Government of Christ's Church: and Juelli Apol. apud Ench. Theol. vi. p. 199. The following testimony of a foreigner, eminent for his learning and abilities, and of a communion differing from ours, must be considered as of great weight. Isaac Casaubon having spent some time in England, writes thus to Salmasius: "*Quod si me conjectura non fallit, totius Reformationis pars integerri- ma est in Angliā, ubi cum studio veritatis viget studium antiquitatis: quam certi homines dum spernunt in laqueos se induunt, unde sine mendacio postea exuere se nequeunt: ita hostibus veritatis non solum risus præbetur, sed etiam partes illorum mirifice confirmantur. Nemo seriò versatus in antiquitate hoc verum esse negaverit. Sed multos amor partium cogit mentiri.*" Epist. I. Casauboni ad Salmasium, Ed. Grævii, 1656. Ep. 709. p. 898.

have

have abandoned the one Apostolical Church is too true. But if they did it not to gratify a spirit of party, or of pride; and if they have approved themselves to be in other points generally pure in faith, and illustrious in obedience, shall we prescribe bounds to God's forgiveness? Charity forbid! Believing that mercy may be extended to any offence, that proceeds not from an heart of malice, with a feeling of inexpressible joy we look forward to a moment, when, sitting down in the kingdom of Heaven with the faithful of other communions, we shall praise with one mouth that Saviour, whom with one heart we have loved; evermore rejoicing that the frailty of human nature no longer interferes to prevent that perfect unity, which when it shall be established upon earth in the external Church, *every valley shall be then exalted, every mountain shall be then laid low, and an high way prepared for the coming of our God*^a.

In the mean time be it suggested, that to convince the Enthusiast of his error, is not the cause of one particular communion, but of the whole Church. Respecting the form of that Church, some of us perhaps may dis-

^a Isaiah xl. 3, 4.

fer ; respecting the sinfulness of Schism, we cannot : and since we must feelingly lament that among us of this nation every effort has hitherto proved ineffectual to reconcile that difference of opinion which, in one unhappy instance, does exist ; we ought to make it our mutual endeavour to prevent as much as possible the spreading of the evil. It is enough that there is one source of division ; *if there be any virtue, if there be any praise*^b, let us so conduct ourselves, as that when we appear in the presence of our Master, we may have to plead, that, instead of widening, we have endeavoured to close the wounds of his afflicted Church.

There are some however who seem not to be affected by these considerations ; who rather embrace every opportunity of encouraging Schism in that Church, the pretensions of which they conceive to be the most adverse to their own ; thus grounding as it were the goodness of their cause upon the sorrows and the humiliation of another Communion. But surely such a wisdom as this favours too much of the present world, to be of God. The kingdoms of the earth indeed may derive strength from the dissensions of a rival state ; but in the kingdom of Christ it is far other-

^b Phil. iv. 8.

wife. *There no member can suffer, but all the members suffer with it ; there none can be honoured, but all rejoice^c.*

And here be it not for one moment supposed that we have heightened the importance of Church Unity, or have exaggerated the criminality of Schism, to point the force of a conclusion, or to serve the purpose of an argument. Long before any contending Churches afflicted Christianity, Schism was foretold as the deadliest of evils, and deprecated as among the worst of transgressions.

Can we be so inattentive as not to have observed, that of our Saviour's last discourse

^c 1 Cor. xii. 26. The avidity with which the Papists embraced every opportunity of fomenting the Schisms which afflicted our Church during the Rebellion, and the motives that led them to this conduct, are too well known to be here insisted on. It is a mournful thing however to reflect, that there should be found in our own kingdom those who would encourage Enthusiasts, in the hope that they may unite against the Established Church. See Dr. Gillies' Life of Mr. Whitefield. On his first appearance in Scotland he was called by some, an Instrument raised up of God, and it is immediately subjoined, "He has already conformed to us both in doctrine, and in worship ; and lies open to conform to us in other points." See Letter from the Minister at Dundee, p. 95. But when Mr. Whitefield declared that "he reckoned the Solemn League and Covenant a sinful Oath, and that he could not see the divine Right of Presbytery ; they came to a presbyterial resolution to have no more to do with him ; and one of them preached a sermon to shew that he could not be an instrument of Reformation." p. 100.

the

the larger part was employed to enforce the necessity of Church Unity; pressing it upon his Disciples, as one of his parting requests, with the most affectionate solicitude? Can we forget that a considerable portion of the Apostolic writings is uniformly appropriated to the urging of the same point? Or, lastly, can it have escaped us, that when St. Paul, now about to receive the crown of glory, sends his farewell Epistle to Timothy, he makes it almost his dying entreaty, that he would caution mankind against those self-commissioned teachers, who, he foresaw, would destroy the peaceful Unity of Christian fellowship?

Wherefore, all things considered, though our schismatic age may object to the language of an ancient Father, who says, “that they
“ never can attain to the reward of eternal
“ peace, who with the rage of discord have
“ broken the peace of the Church^d,” yet surely no one can refuse assent to the words of the pious Chrysostom, who asserts, “that nothing

^d “Ad pacis præmium venire non possunt, qui pacem Domini
“ discordiæ furore ruperunt.” Cyprianus de Unit. Eccl. p. 197.
ed. Baluzii. Yet the declaration of St. Ignatius was precisely
the same. Μη πλαναοθε αδελφοι μου· εις τις χιζοντι ακολουθει, βασιλειαν
Θεου κληρονομει. Ep. ad Philadel. sec. 3.

“ so sharpens the anger of God, as the divisions of his Church ‘.’”

Would that the sentiments of these holy men were more attended to; and would also that the arguments, by which they may be supported, were duly considered. Were this the case, it would be morally impossible that the Enthusiast could be so deluded, as to think slightly of an offence, which the first Christians (who, living and conversing with the Apostles, must certainly have known the express will of God in this particular,) never mention, but in terms of the greatest apprehension. Nay, so fearful were they lest the

‘ Οὐδὲν ἔγω παροξύνει τὸν Θεόν, ὡς τὸ ἐκκλησίαν διαιρεῖσθαι. Chrys. In Eph. Homil. xi. ed. Ben. vol. xi. p. 86. But he says, I do not speak merely my own sentiments. Ἀνὴρ τις ἅγιος (St. Ignatius) εἶπε τι δοκεν εἶναι τολμηρὸν, πλὴν ἀλλ’ ὁμῶς ἐφ’ ὀργῇ λέγει. τι δὲ τῆτο εἶναι; οὐδὲ μαρτυρίου αἵμα ταύτην δυνατὸν ἐξαλεῖφειν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν. The illustration which he adduces in another place, to shew how the schismatic injures himself by separating from the Church, is striking and just. Εἰ τυχοί χειρ’ ἀποσπαδεῖσα τοῦ σώματος, τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἀπὸ τοῦ ἐγκεφαλίου τὴν συνέχειαν ζητοῦν, καὶ μὴ εὖρον οὐκ ἐξάλλεται τοῦ σώματος, καὶ διατρησάν πρὸς τὴν χεῖρα ἐξέρχεται, ἀλλ’ ἂν μὴ εὖρη κείμενον, οὐχ ἄπτεται’ in like manner he argues the spiritual strength which, proceeding from Christ as the head of his Church, is communicated to every one who forms part of that body, cannot be supposed to animate such as have wilfully torn themselves from it. Ibid. p. 84, 5. It was for these reasons that the early Christians gave the sin of Schism the epithet *φρικώδης*; a sin which it makes one shudder to think of.

Angels,

Angels, who attend upon the *little ones in Christ*, should have to accuse them, when they appeared before the face of their Almighty Father, as the cause of their having been offended in the Gospel; that the venerable Bishop of the Church at Antioch exclaims, in a sentiment of Christian charity, nearly similar to that which moved the holy Apostle, “ O may my soul become a sacrifice, “ if so be it might expiate the sin of Schism, “ in our Church^f.

Here then let us conclude. Whether sufficient has been said to remove delusion from the mind of the Enthusiast, or not, it cannot but be hoped that enough may have been advanced to engage the attention of the young. For there is no error into which their minds, glowing with the pure warmth of religious zeal, and artless piety, may be so easily betrayed, as that of Enthusiasm: therefore it became important that the sinfulness of Schism, an offence to which in consequence they would probably be led, should be minutely exposed.

They may find it pleasing indeed to adopt such opinions as are the most connected with

^f Having reproved them for their Schisms, he adds Περιφροσιν υμων, και αγωνιζομαι υμων Εφισιων εκκλησιας. Ignatius ad Eph. cap. viii. See Rom. ix. 3.

feeling; and they may think it natural to estimate their progress in Religion by the fervour with which they conduct themselves, and the rapturous sensations which they experience. But it is our duty strictly to guard them against acting under these impressions. Religion may sometimes be purest in that bosom, in which feeling is permitted to have the least controul.

For which reason they would do well to consider attentively the dispassionate observation of Augustine, who asserts, “ Periit judicium, postquam res transiit ad affectum.” And with what propriety has he assigned the cause; “ Nostram qualemcunque, quia nostra jam facta est, prævalere volumus sententiam &.” An observation which deserves so much the more attention, as it falls from the pen of one, who in his writings uniformly testifies the utmost fervour of devotion, and zeal for the honour of God.

The opinions which we acquire in early youth are so endeared to us on this account, that at all times they are defended with a

§ See Augustine, as quoted in an admirable little Treatise of the Rev. J. Norris, published by his son, J. Norris, of Bemerton, entitled, *A Discourse concerning the Pretended Religious assembling in private Conventicles*, 1683. p. 198.

pertinacity, which old age can seldom conquer, or prudence moderate. But when we permit these opinions to excite in us a still stronger interest, either from believing that we have been the first to discover them ; or from having once maintained them publicly ; they may then obtain such an ascendancy over the mind, as no power of reason, no suggestion of experience, can ever afterwards controul.

In urging this reflection it cannot but occur, that, had its propriety been at all times acknowledged, we should now have been spared the pain of witnessing the growth of a Schism, which, arising from the zeal of a few pious, but afterwards enthusiastic young men, has produced, and may still continue to produce, consequences, which had its authors foreseen, they would themselves have been the first to deprecate.

Their Schism, as originating in Enthusiastic Delusion, in the ensuing Lectures we will attentively consider. In discovering its origin, in tracing its progress, and in detecting its fallacies, we shall often be obliged to censure, and frequently to condemn the conduct of men, whom on many other accounts we cannot but admire. Still however Charity may be preserved. That Virtue, whose attribute

it is at all times to cover the transgressions of a fellow creature, will teach us in the present instance to expose them no further, than shall be strictly necessary to defend the cause of truth. At all events, where the object is peace, no cause of offence, it may be hoped, can well be given.

Should it happen otherwise (which God forbid), and should that which was designed for good be turned to evil; we cannot but lament the frowardness of the human heart; and grieve to think that *when we labour for peace, and speak unto men thereof, there should be any who would make ready for battle*^h. It will prove our consolation however to reflect, that it is to our *heavenly Master alone, that we stand or fall*ⁱ.

But it would excite a sentiment of a far different nature, were it found that any thing here advanced was capable of being perverted to the prejudice of true Religion. For should occasion be taken from those arguments which have been urged against Enthusiasm, to indulge a spirit of indifference, and to discountenance the exercise of that piety, which, when well regulated, can never

^h Psalm cxx. 6.

ⁱ Rom. xiv. 4.

be too fervent, I then should have but too much cause to say, in the words of the expiring Martyr, “ Would that this unworthy “ hand had perished,” ere it had done aught that could have been made a cause of offence to the least among my Christian Brethren ^k.

^k “ And when the wood was kindled, and the fire began to “ burn, near him, stretching out his arm, he put his right hand “ into the flame, which he held so steadfast and immoveable “ (saying that once with the same hand he wiped his face), “ *evermore crying with a loud voice, This hand hath offended; that* “ all men might see his hand burned, before his body was “ touched.” *Fox*, p. 1888. and *Strype’s Life of Cranmer*, p. 389.

SERMON III.

JOHN xiv. 15.

IF YE LOVE ME, KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS.

THERE is perhaps no reflection, which ought to impress us with a more humiliating sense of the weakness of human nature, than this ; That in the pursuit of what is Good we should be so frequently betrayed into Evil. Why the corruptions of a fallen nature should be permitted so to operate, as that any quality, in itself commendable, should ever prove a snare to us, it is neither profitable nor becoming to enquire. It is sufficient to know that many of our faults arise not so much from the indulgence of a vicious, as from the abuse of some virtuous principle.

They who speculate on the imperfections of their fellow-creatures with the unamiable coldness of philosophy, may treat errors such as these with contempt : but he who has im-
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bibed the genuine spirit of Christianity will consider them as entitled to pity and forbearance; and he will draw from them an additional motive to aspire after a better and a purer existence. Nor is this the only improvement he will derive from contemplating these instances of human imperfection. He will learn that nothing is more inimical to spiritual perfection than spiritual security; he will observe, that every movement of the heart of Man, be it good or be it evil, is equally subject to the restraint of divine law: and he will acknowledge that one of the immediate objects of Christianity is, not merely to reform our vices, but to regulate our virtues.

Few passages of Scripture afford a stronger confirmation of the above truths, than the words adduced in the text.

Our Divine Lord being now about to give the last proof of his infinite love towards mankind, is there described as pointing out to his Disciples the nature of that love which he expected from them in return. He wishes not that it should be expressed either by incessant acts of prayer and adoration; or by such devotional austerities as would prevent them from fulfilling the several relative duties which they owed their neighbour. To
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their obedience he refers for the proof of their affection. *If ye love me, keep my commandments.*

This then is the rule by which every Christian should strive to regulate his conduct. Whatever demonstrations of love are suggested by his feelings, these he ought at all times to distrust; for they may be derived from pride, from self-conceit, or vanity^a; but in his obedience to his Saviour's commandments he cannot be deceived. *If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him; and we will come unto him, and we will make our abode with him^b.*

The piety with which the Church of England receives this precept of our Lord, has ever formed one of its most distinguished characteristics. For from the time of its first establishment, to the present hour, it has uniformly refused to countenance every expres-

^a "I will not say that all violences and extravagancies of a religious fancy are illusions; but I will say that they are all unnatural; not hallowed by the warrant of a revelation, nothing reasonable, nothing secure. I am not sure that they even consist with humility; but it is confessed that they are often produced by self-love, arrogancy, and the great opinion others have of us." *Bp. Taylor's Great Exemplar*, Part I. Discourse iii. ad Sec. 5. § 24.

^b John xiv. 23.

sion of devotion that has the least tincture of extravagance, or that might be supposed to proceed from the Spirit of Enthusiasm. Not that our Reformers encouraged lukewarmness; or that they wanted motives to animate the religious affections: far from it! But observing the errors into which some had been betrayed, from not having acted with prudence in these particulars; and perceiving with what obstinacy those errors were afterwards defended; they could not but infer, that when men exceed the limits of prescribed obedience, they prove that it is their own conceits, and not the commands of God, which are made the object of their love^c.

And yet this caution has been misrepre-

^c “ The expressions of our Love to God ought to be regulated, “ not by our blind and wild phancies, but by his revealed will, “ and therefore it is very possible to be too devout: not because any expression of Love can be made with too much ardency, whilst ’tis considered abstractedly in itself, and irrelevantly to the rest; but because that there being several duties of Love, which require an ardency of it, ’tis injurious to exercise all that, in one alone, or a few, that belongs equally to the neglected others.” *Boyle, on Scrupulous Love*, p. 24. It is agreeably to this truth that the pious Bp. Hall says, “ If we cannot do any thing in the degree that God requireth, we yet must learn to do every thing in the form that he prescribeth. He whose infinite mercy uses to pass by our sins of infirmity, yet punisheth severely our bold faults.” *Works*, vol. i. p. 1094.

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sented. For because we would uniformly discountenance the conduct of those, who seem to think that no restraint ought to be imposed on the exercise of religious affections, it has been suggested, that we are lukewarm in the cause of religion; that our godliness is form; and our devotions merely ceremonial.

Experience has however proved that the principle on which we act is just. Who will deny that some of the worst corruptions of Christianity have arisen from a want of due regulation of the heart in this particular? Thus whilst an improper exercise of humility introduced that will-worship, which afterwards led the way to the grossest idolatries; a desire of obtaining visionary perfection, and a more intimate union with God, by exciting spiritual pride, gave birth to those various Sects of Enthusiasts, who in all ages have arisen to destroy the Unity, and to pervert the Doctrines of the Christian Church.

From among these Sects there is not one perhaps, which might not be selected to illustrate what has been advanced in the preceding Lectures concerning the delusive nature and the evil consequences of Enthusiasm. We might shew, for instance, how groundless the pretensions of Montanus were to divine
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illumination, by proving that the doctrines he professed were repugnant to Scripture: we might expose the sinfulness of his conduct in afterwards creating Schism, inasmuch as his reason ought to have convinced him that the authority on which he acted was mere Enthusiastic Delusion; and then we might insist on the necessity of restraining our religious affections within those bounds, which, from a knowledge of human infirmity, Divine Goodness has appointed^d.

But, generally speaking, we attend little to the instruction which the History of past

^d “ Montanus had hardly embraced the Christian faith, but
 “ his great austerities of life made him to be particularly taken
 “ notice of, and to be had in esteem among many of the most
 “ zealous, but indiscreet Christians: and as he had a zeal very
 “ extraordinary for that Holy Religion into which he had been
 “ baptized, he would needs set up for a mighty reformer of
 “ the Church: but wanting solidity of judgment, and cool-
 “ ness of thought, he was apt to be driven by every impulse
 “ that seized him. *Lee's Hist. of Montanism*, Art. i. sec. 2. For
 the particular opinions of this Enthusiast, see the work above
 quoted, and Mosheim's *Eccles. Hist. Cent. II. p. ii. c. 5*. The
 most learned and eminent of the followers of Montanus was
 Tertullian, a man of great learning, genius, and piety. Mo-
 sheim justly remarks, that the conduct of this person “ has
 “ shewn to the world a mortifying spectacle of the deviations
 “ of which human nature is capable, even in those in whom it
 “ seems to have approached the nearest to perfection.” *Mosheim*,
 ut supra.

ages may present. What is remote feebly interests us: and however our own opinions may resemble errors which have been long since exploded, we are always more ready to mark the points in which they differ, than to make any application which may detect the fallacy of such notions as we have been accustomed to maintain^e.

This then being the case, let it not excite one uncharitable thought, one invidious reflection, if it be suggested that the history of

^e When the famous Mr. Leslie engaged in his controversy with the Quakers, his object was, not merely to expose the errors of that particular Sect, but the dangerous tendency of the Enthusiastic Spirit, whenever it should be permitted to operate. "Quakerism is but one branch of Enthusiasm, though the most spread and infectious of any now known in this part of the world. Therefore let the frightful and stupendous prospect of Quakerism guard others from other sorts of Enthusiasm, that seem more plausible, but spring all from the same stock, and draw after them the same damnable consequences." *Preface to the Snake in the Grass*, in init. It was thus also that, in the beginning of the last century, the History of Montanism was written to shew the delusion of those who were at that time pretending to the gift of Prophecy. See *Dr. Hicks's Spirit of Enthusiasm Exorcised*, as published with the History of Montanism above mentioned, and *Mr. Spinkes's Examination of the New Pretenders to Prophecy*, Lond. 1709. But though the arguments which were adduced to confute these last Enthusiasts, might be applied to confute those of the present day, it is to be feared that few among them are inclined, either to make the application, or to profit by it.

no Sect can more properly be adduced to illustrate the truth of all the positions which we have hitherto advanced, than that of the prevailing Enthusiasm of the present day.

Arguing, and justly too, that the Creature cannot devote the affection of his heart too entirely to the Creator; but forgetting that this affection might be expressed in a manner injurious to the honour of his name, the Authors of this Sect appear to have begun by forming in their minds erroneous conceptions of the nature of that love towards God, which Religion has commanded them to exercise. It should seem that they placed it rather in doing what their feelings persuaded them was right, than in faithfully performing such duties as had been prescribed^f. Impressed with this notion, and hurried on by the natural fervour of their dispositions, they soon mistook the suggestions of a warm imagination for particular communications from above; in consequence of which, overlooking the restraints which the sacredness of Church Unity imposed, they wilfully involved themselves in the Sin of Schism.

^f See, *Letters illustrating the early History of the Rev. J. Wesley*, published by J. Priestley, 1791; and, *A short Account of God's Dealings with the Rev. Mr. G. Whitefield*, written and published by himself.

Unpleasing therefore though the task will be, nevertheless, our enquiries shall be now directed to a particular, but we will humbly believe, not an uncharitable examination of the conduct which these Sectaries pursued. And should we be able to prove that they were actuated by the Spirit of Enthusiasm, may we not reasonably infer, that their cause, which rests on so delusive a foundation, ought to be for ever abandoned? At all events, we may hope, that their advocates will be induced to withhold in future those undeservedly bitter censures, with which they have assailed us of the Established Church for opposing their pretensions. We are not strangers to those principles of vital Christianity which some schismatical congregations would pretend that they alone possess. The Established Ministry acknowledges that the love of God is the principle from which all human actions ought to be derived; they gratefully confess that it was this principle which first reformed, and which can alone support their Communion: but they believe that their love of God is never so clearly manifested, as when it would exclude all wilful innovation from divine worship; and they assert, that no virtue sheds a purer lustre on the Christian character than that unassuming piety which eludes as it were

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the observation of the world, by the humility with which it adheres to those institutions which ought to be considered as of perpetual obligation in the Church of Christ.

In asserting that the persons whose pretensions we are going to examine were Enthusiasts, and in charging them with Schism, I know that I am advancing that which they have repeatedly denied. These then are the points which we are called upon to establish. They shall have each a separate and a serious consideration: and for the sake of the greater perspicuity, we will confine ourselves, in the present Lecture, to the latter; and we will endeavour to shew that the Authors of this new Sect stand justly chargeable with Schism.

But here it will be proper to premise, that the only object we have in view, and all that our argument requires, is to prove their separation from the Established Church. Yet were we to insist at the same time that this separation was Schism, in the strict Apostolical meaning of the word, these Sectaries could not object to the conclusion. For since they will not deny that a departure from the true Apostolical Church is Schism: and since they appear to have uniformly acknowledged that our Church really deserves that character, they at all events, as far as their own
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convictions are concerned, must needs allow, that if they have separated from it, they have made themselves guilty of Schism, in that sense of the word which was assigned to it by the Apostles. However, be this as it may ; we are here simply to prove that they are guilty of Schism from the Church of England.

Now the argument which they advanced to remove this imputation was constantly the same ; namely, that they used our Liturgy, and that they adhered to our Articles. If therefore it can be shewn that they did not adhere to our Articles ; and moreover that they did not use our Liturgy ; then, according to their own account, they must be guilty of Schism^s.

Let us first examine how far they used our Liturgy.

And here it is observable, that this argument, whether valid or not, can be urged by one only of the persons in question ; for the greater part of those congregations which owe their establishment to the other, reject our

^s It is so evident that Mr. Wesley and Mr. Whitefield have separated from the Church of England, that any attempt to prove it might be thought superfluous. As, however, there is reason to suppose that the actual grounds of separation are by no means universally understood ; and as many of the facts which we shall adduce are not so well known as they ought to be ; we may be pardoned for having given an entire Lecture to the consideration of this point.

Liturgy altogether, and substitute extemporaneous prayer in its place^h. Now, this latter is a mode of worship so little approved of by the Church of England, that it is one of those very points which she has never yielded to her opponentsⁱ. In the time of her greatest danger, when a concession on this head might almost have averted that storm which menaced her destruction, she declared, that it was her resolution never to relinquish a practice which always had been deemed a characteristic of the Apostolic Church. And when afterwards the subtlest arguments, the bitterest revilings, and the fiercest efforts

^h Of course this position will be understood, as indeed it is stated, generally. Doubtless some of Mr. Whitefield's congregations use our Liturgy. It is sufficient for our argument to shew what is the general character of Mr. W.'s communion; and what were his own sentiments. These may be clearly learned from the following circumstance. Mr. Whitefield refused to accept a charter for a College, which he wished to found in America, because the conditions on which it was to be granted were: "That the head of the College should be a member of the Church of England; and that the public prayers should not be extempore ones, but the Liturgy of the Church, or some other settled and established form." *Gillies' Life*, &c. p. 251.

ⁱ The Schismatics in the time of the Rebellion carried their bigotry on this point so far, as to assert, that in repeated instances the Almighty had miraculously punished, nay, that he had smitten with death, such Ministers as attempted to defend, or to use the Offices of the Church of England. See *Anmus Mirabilis*, published 1661, p. 62, 64, et seq.

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were made to shake her constancy, she still continued to assert, that the use of a set form of prayer was to constitute one of the distinctive marks of her Communion. If then a person shall form new congregations, without enjoining to them the use of our Offices, knowing at the same time that the use of those Offices has been uniformly considered by the Church of England, as an essential part of its constitution; can it be said that he preserves communion with us? Certainly it is impossible¹.

Which conclusion is so obvious, that, dismissing this part of our enquiry, we will proceed to consider, somewhat more at large, the plea of him, who seems at first sight to have been better warranted in his assertion, that he did employ in his congregations the Liturgy of the Church of England.

Were we to attempt to decide this question, by ascertaining what was the practice of

¹ "As for the irregularities I have been guilty of in curtailing the Liturgy, or of not using the Common Prayer in the fields, &c. I think it needless to make any apology, till I am called thereto in a judicial way by my Ecclesiastical Superiors." *Whitefield's Works*, vol. iv. p. 119. For the light in which Mr. Whitefield viewed Field Preaching, see a subsequent note. In another place he uses the following contemptuous expression: "I am sorry to hear that there are yet disputes among us about brick walls." See *Math. Monitor*, v. i. p. 36.

each individual congregation which he established ; whether they did all use our Liturgy, at the time when they were first formed ; and whether they still continue to use it, or not ; it is evident we should be led into a discussion that might never be closed ; for it would be almost impossible to say with precision what mode of conduct was in each particular instance adopted : nor, if it were possible, would it materially affect the question. It is sufficient that we know what is exactly in point, that the Founder of these congregations, having, at an advanced period of life, and after the maturest deliberation, established his communion in places where he thought himself at liberty to act without the least restraint, appointed a Liturgy, which was formed entirely upon his own opinions, and published by his own authority^k.

^k It is not impossible but that some may argue, that this Liturgy having been made at the time when Mr. Wesley formally established his Communion in America, nothing is to be concluded from it against him with regard to his conduct in England. Should such an argument be ever adduced, we would then suggest ; 1. That in the title of the book it is described to be the " Service of the Methodists in his Majesty's " Dominions," without the smallest intimation of its being addressed only to a part of his congregations. 2. It is not specified to have been made for the Americans, and in fact it is only recommended to them in the preface incidentally. Mr. Wesley's words are these : " Little alteration is made in the " following edition of the Common Prayer of the Church of " England

I know that he asserted it to be the Common Prayer of the Church of England: but it may be shewn that this assertion is completely unfounded; nay, even he himself confesses it to be so, when he allows that he has made in it *some little alterations*. If the smallest alteration be wilfully made, is it not a contradiction in terms to call it the Liturgy used by the Church of England?

Let us observe however, what the number and what the nature of these alterations are, which he confesses he has made. He says; First, that “ he has omitted *most* of the “ holy-days (so called) as at present answering no valuable end.” Secondly, “ That he “ has *considerably shortened* the Service of the “ Lord’s Day, the length of which had been “ often complained of.” Thirdly, “ That he “ has omitted some sentences in the Offices of “ *Baptism*, and for the Burial of the Dead:” and Fourthly, “ That he has left out *many* Psalms, “ and *many parts* of the others, as being *highly*

“ England (which I recommend to our Societies in America), “ except, &c. &c.” 3. In the forty-second Conference he proposed it to the Methodists in Scotland, for their adoption; and, 4. In the ensuing Conference he recommended it generally to all his Societies, under the express title given it above. See *Myles’s Chronological Hist. of the People called Methodists*, p. 128, 130.

“ *improper* for the mouths of a Christian congregation¹. ”

Such are the alterations specified. On their extreme impropriety, and on the dangerousness of the measure adopted, we need not now insist. We will only ask, whether, such alterations being made, any member of the Church of England can consider the Liturgy to be the same with that which he has been accustomed to use ?

Let us suppose that we were to take from the Gospels more than one half of their contents ; and that we were to accommodate the remaining part to some peculiar conceptions of our own ; if in this state we were to offer them to the very person in question, and were to tell him, that, although thus disfigured, they were the genuine writings of the Evangelists, which had been uniformly acknowledged in the Christian Church, would he not consider it as mere mockery in us to make such an assertion ? Unquestionably he would. And it is precisely the same degree of mockery to tell us that the Liturgy mutilated after a similar manner, still remains the Liturgy of the established Church.

¹ See preface to the “ Sunday Service of the Methodists.” The edition constantly referred to in these Lectures is that printed by Frys and Couchman, Worship Street, Upper Moorfields, 1786.

As we are concerned, strictly speaking, with the mere identity of this Form of Prayer in question, and as we have shewn that it is not the same with that which is acknowledged by our Communion, we here might close this part of our enquiry; for the argument is by no means affected by the greater or less degree of impropriety in the variations themselves. One of them however is of such importance, that we cannot but stop to notice it.

We are told by the founder of the Sect, that he altered many of all the Psalms, and that he left out some altogether, as being “improper” to be used in a Christian congregation^m. I question whether such a conduct as this be not nearly unexampled in the history of Christianity. We learn indeed that there were Hereticks of old, who rejected from the Scriptures some particular passages, because they were repugnant to those opinions which they professed; and their conduct is deservedly held up to us

^m It will be proper to remark, 1. That thirty-four of the Psalms have been entirely discarded; 2. That sixty-one have been extremely mutilated; thus the 68th is reduced from thirty-five verses to eighteen; the 73d from twenty-seven to fourteen; and of the 89th, which contains fifty verses, only seventeen are permitted to stand: 3. That even of the remaining fifty-five Psalms, there are very few which have not been in many places altered from the commonly received version.

as something sacrilegious. Yet which of them ever maintained that so large a portion of the inspired Writings, as that which has been condemned by the person in question, was unfit to be read. Surely it cannot be forgotten that the Psalms are repeatedly pointed out to us by our Divine Master as the genuine inspirations of the Holy Ghost. And are these unfit for the edification of Christians? But again. Could it be said that any of the Psalms were more entitled to our attention than the rest, it certainly would be those which the Son of God had acknowledged to be prophetic of himself; and above all others, that would claim our regard to which he referred when suffering in his human nature on the Crossⁿ. Yet would it be thought credible that this latter is one of the very Psalms which was thought to require correction; and of those Psalms which are confessedly descriptive of our Saviour's coming in the flesh; of his humiliation; of his

ⁿ Psalm xxii. See Matth. xxvii. 46. That Psalm, or some part of it, was recited by our Blessed Lord, says Hammond, that he might testify "that he was the Messiah, for whom that Psalm was indited, and in whom it was fulfilled." See Hammond in loc. Mr. Wesley has reduced this Psalm from thirty-two verses to twenty-eight, and has divided it into two parts, the former of which is introduced into his Morning, the latter into his Evening Service.

Death, and subsequent ascension into Glory ; of these, I say, the greater part are condemned, “ as being highly improper for the mouth “ of a Christian congregation °.”

But enough on this subject. The more we are astonished at the daringness, and the more we lament the impiety of the above changes, so much the more we are called upon to protest against the assertions of that Sectary, who would persuade the world, that although he adopts a Liturgy, into which such innovations have been introduced, he still is using the Liturgy of the Church of England ^P.

° Thus Psalm 110, and 132, both of them eminently prophetic of our Saviour’s coming in the Flesh, are discarded by Mr. Wesley, from the Book of Psalms : so are the 54th and 88th, which are descriptive of his sufferings ; and the 21st and 108th, which declare his glory subsequent to his Ascension. It must ever remain incomprehensible to us, why these Psalms are to be considered as *highly improper for the mouths of a Christian congregation*.

^P Mr. Wesley says that he has omitted some “ *few sentences* “ *in the Office of Baptism*.” Consequently every one is to suppose that, with the exception of a *few sentences*, his form of Baptism is the same with that of the Church of England. After this it will hardly then be thought credible, when it shall be stated, that of the whole Office only four prayers, and this including the Lord’s Prayer, are retained : That the use of Sponsors is abolished ; That no vow or promise is made for such as are baptized when infants : That the Creed which is proposed to them of riper years is altered in two places : That the act
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Such then are the alterations which, according to his own confession, have been introduced into our Form of Common Prayer; and these, whether we regard their number or their quality, are more than sufficient to establish the point under consideration. It is important however to remark, that many more alterations were made than the Author of the Sect has thought fit to specify. For instance: all our occasional services are rejected; the Rubrick and the appointed Lessons in most places altered; the Catechism, the Nicene and the Athanasian Creeds are discarded; and the form of Absolution is in some places altoge-

of the Minister, who after baptizing says, "We receive this Child or Person into the congregation of Christ's Flock, &c." is omitted: That, whereas it is said in our Office, that "such as are baptized are regenerate, and grafted into the Body of Christ's Church," in Mr. Wesley's it is said merely "that they are admitted into the visible Body of Christ's Church:" That whereas our Church prays that "the water may be sanctified to the mystical washing away of Sin," this, and in like manner all mention of Regeneration in Baptism is discarded. Having made these changes, Mr. W. then adds, "The Minister, if he see it expedient, may conclude with a prayer extempore;" which in fact will make Baptism mean exactly what the person who officiates may chance to think it means; for every one will pray according to his own notions of the Sacrament. What excuse can be offered for a concealment so disingenuous? what arguments can be brought to authorize innovations so important?

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ther omitted, or, when introduced, is rendered merely an act of Supplication, not of Ministerial Authority. Why, may we ask, why were these, and some other omissions (which shall be mentioned hereafter) passed over unnoticed? Are we to conjecture that they were not noticed, in order that the minds of the congregation might not be alarmed, at seeing the wideness of the breach, which in reality would separate them from the Church of England? Many, who from a well-intentioned but a most inconsiderate zeal were induced to follow these new Teachers, certainly had it not in their intentions to abandon altogether an establishment, which they could not but allow was Apostolical. It was prudent therefore to persuade them, that they were using, with no alterations, or at least with such as were very immaterial, the regular Offices of their Church^a.

^a Should the above conjectures as to the motives that induced Mr. Wesley to use such repeated and deliberate concealment be thought invidious, before they are condemned, the History of his Life at large should be attentively considered. The two following instances, selected from among many, may prove that Mr. W. thought himself at liberty to avail himself of means to promote the interests of his Communion, which we cannot but condemn as highly unjustifiable. At the thirty-eighth Methodistical Conference, it was proposed: "Ought we not to exhort all dying persons to be then, at least, merciful after their power?" It was determined, "We ought; without any regard to the reflections that will be cast upon us on that account."

Should this have been the cause, how painful will it be to discover such a disengenuous mode of acting, on the part of one who was upheld to the world as a person raised by the

“count.” *Myles’s Chronological History of the People called Methodists*, p. 120. At the thirty-sixth Conference it was determined, that a general decrease of their communions was owing, “partly to a want of trying new places; partly to prejudice against the King, *speaking evil of dignities*,” &c. and to remedy this evil, it was ordered, “that none should be suffered to preach with them, who spoke evil of those in authority, or prophesied evil to the nation.” *Myles ut sup.* p. 118. This was in 1779. It should be observed, that Mr. Wesley, at the beginning of the American War, was so zealous an opposer of Government in that measure, that he preached against it: suddenly however his opinions changed; and, to the astonishment of his friends, he not only wrote against the Americans, but in private, on every possible occasion, and in public from the pulpit, he was heard constantly and violently to defend the conduct of Administration; see *Hampson’s Life of Wesley*, vol. iii. p. 134. In consequence of this change in Mr. Wesley’s sentiments, the Americans were called Rebels; and all the acts of the American Methodists, and their very names, were expunged from the minutes of the general Society. His conduct however in this instance seems to have been suggested more by policy than by conviction; for no sooner was the peace concluded, than he wrote to congratulate the Americans on their “being freed from the State and the Hierarchy, exhorting them to stand fast in that liberty with which God had so strangely made them free.” *Hampson ut supra*, vol. ii. p. 174. May we not conjecture that Mr. Whitefield also was influenced by political motives when he thus wrote to a friend: “For Christ’s sake, let *all means be used* to keep up and increase Tottenham-Court and Tabernacle Societies. Pray be particular about Church and State.” See *Works*, vol. iii. p. 399.

Almighty for the preservation of his Church ! and what a contrast does it form with the sincerity of the Apostles ! They considered that the God of truth could not be served by artifice ; they rigidly adhered to that sacred principle, that evil should not be done, that good might follow^r ; and attested the reality of their mission by the simplicity of their conduct. But we need not dwell on the comparison : the only conclusion on which we are now to insist is this : That as the Authors of this Sect did either reject from their Communion our Book of Common Prayer ; or else introduced such changes into it, as our Church could not but reprobate, their conduct with reference to the Liturgy. instead of disproving, substantiates against them in the strongest manner the charge of Schism.

Let us now observe how far their adherence to our Articles is such as may entitle them to be called members of our Communion.

First, then, with regard to him who seems avowedly to reject our Liturgy, we cannot hesitate to say, that by this very conduct he has departed from our Articles. But sup-

^r Rom. iii. 8.

posing that a rejection of the former did not involve a departure from the latter; let us see how far his use of the Article concerning Predestination and Election, on which he grounds the proof generally of his adherence to the Articles of the Church of England, be really sufficient to support his assertion.

Let it however be understood, that, in entering on this part of our subject, we by no means intend to enquire whether that system be just, which the Calvinists have adopted concerning the decrees of the Almighty. He having himself declared, that he *hath made darkness his pavilion*^s; that *his thoughts are not our thoughts*, and that *his ways are past finding out*^t; it becomes not us to think that we can ever comprehend the secret counsel of his will. *Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or, being his Counsellor, hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him judgment*^u? If an irreversible sentence respecting the election and reprobation of each particular person be indeed revealed to us, even the advocates of this opinion must allow that the very circumstance of its being revealed so darkly, proves that it was

^s Psalm xviii. 11.

^t Isaiah lv. 8. 9. Rom. xi. 33.

^u Isaiah xl. 13, 14.

never designed to have been made a fundamental article of belief in the Christian Church^x. If however, on the contrary, it be a system formed either by misapplying to individuals, promises which were made to nations at large; or else by assuming certain notions concerning the attributes of God, and by deciding without due warrant on the manner in which his glory is to be promoted; may not every assertion on this head stand chargeable with presumption^y? While Cha-

^x “What is revealed only is the rule of our duty. Why then do we search into those decrees which we call secret? If God will have them secret, why will we not let them be secret? He smote fifty-thousand and seventy of the Bethshemites, with a great slaughter, because they looked into his Ark. (1 Sam. vi. 19.) And who dare pry into what he has reserved, as a secret, from us?” *Leslie's Works*, vol. i. p. 801.

^y As part of the Calvinistic system is founded on this assumption, that the glory of God is to be promoted by the condemnation of the reprobate; “Ideo (reprobi) Dei judicio suscitati sunt, ad gloriam ejus suâ damnatione illustrandum.” *Calvin*, Inst. L. III. c. xxiv. 14. we cannot but suggest, that this is so tremendous an assertion, that nothing but the most explicit, the most unequivocal revelation could have authorized any one to have made it. If we will not content ourselves with believing, that the honour of the Father is promoted by our faith and obedience to the Gospel of his Son; but must rather indulge in the vanity of reason, by speculating on the motives that induced the Almighty to create all things to his glory; we may humbly venture to say, that the following passage from a truly pious and learned writer seems to offer motives more

rity therefore should make us wish that so mysterious a subject as the Predestinations of the Most High had never been agitated, Humility will suggest, that we ought to pass it over in awful and religious silence. It would not have been alluded to in the present instance, had it not been asserted, that our Church exacts from us an avowal of the rigid Calvinistic doctrine, as a term of communion.

To apply the 17th Article to this use, is to apply it to a purpose absolutely contrary to that which it was designed to answer. That this Article is framed in such a manner, as that men may subscribe to it, holding Predestination in the Calvinistic sense of the term, we

consonant to the idea of Him who is Goodness absolute, than that which has been quoted above: "When God seeks his own glory, he does not so much endeavour any thing without himself. He did not bring this stately fabric of the universe into being, that he might for such a monument of his mighty power and beneficence gain some panegyrics, or applause, from a little of that fading breath, which he had made: neither was that gracious contrivance of restoring lapsed men to himself *a plot*, to get himself some eternal Hallelujahs; as if He had so ardently thirsted after the lays of glorified spirits, or desired a quire of souls to sing forth his praises: neither was it to let the world see how magnificent he was: no: it is his own internal glory that he most loves, and the communication thereof which he seeks." *Smith's Select Discourses*, p. 408.

will

will readily allow; but then we maintain that the words of the Article, in their literal meaning, do not assert the Calvinistic tenets; and at all events, that its concluding clauses were added purposely that those might be included within the pale of our Church, who should think that Predestination ought to be understood in a different manner. When therefore some of the Sect before us contend, that our Articles will consist with the Doctrine of the Decrees, we cannot condemn their conduct, though we do not assent to their opinions. But when they add, that we are forbidden to entertain any other sentiments on this head; when they insist, that the Framers of those Articles intended that they should exact from us a solemn recognition of the Calvinistic tenets; and when in consequence they apply the bitter terms of hypocrisy and perjury to all such as shall give them a different construction, as being more consonant to the genuine meaning of Scripture; it is they who must be charged with having departed from our Articles; inasmuch as they pervert them, if not from their meaning, at least from their use; making them peremptory, when they were not designed to be peremptory; affirming, that they allow no latitude, when they were pur-

posely so framed as to give latitude; and insisting that they make a particular doctrine the term of communion, when the Church of England, by those very Articles, disclaims every such intention^z.

* As Mr. Whitefield asserted, that in maintaining Calvinism he was maintaining the great doctrines of our Reformation; the doctrines of Cranmer, Ridley, and Latimer; we cannot but observe, that these three persons never taught the Calvinistic tenets; and moreover, that many passages from their writings might be adduced to shew that they explicitly disclaimed them. See this argument pursued in *A Dissertation on the 17th Article of the Church of England*, printed at Oxford, 1773. The following circumstance however may be thought perhaps sufficient of itself to decide the question. When our three great Reformers were in prison, Bradford, a short time previous to their martyrdom, having written a treatise concerning God's Election, in which it should seem that he had inclined towards Calvinism, sent it to Ridley, begging, that if he thought good, it might receive his sanction, with that of Cranmer and of Latimer. It is evident however, that the three Bishops disapproved of Bradford's treatise; and that not only their approbation was withheld, but that Ridley wrote a small tract, in answer to it; though unfortunately it is now lost. See Letters of the Martyrs, fol. 64. and the Dissertation above quoted, p. 72. et seq. Ridley's words, in answer to Bradford, are very remarkable: "Syr, in those matters concerning God's Election, I am so fearful, that I dare not speak farther, yea, almost none otherwise than the very texte dothe (as it wer) lead me by the hand." *Lett. of Mart.* 64, 65. Now, the 17th Article being couched, as near as possible, in the express terms of Scripture, we not only are enabled to assign it perhaps to its very author, but also to know the precise object he had in view when compiling it. If Ridley then were living, and
were

Thus much then will suffice to consider the question, as far as it concerns one of the Founders of the Sect. The other has placed himself under such circumstances as will allow us to bring more immediate proof against him, of his having departed from the Articles of the Established Church. For to the Liturgy which he gave his new Communion, Articles of Religion are added; formed, in some respects indeed, upon ours, but in most of the essential points so widely different, that it would be unreasonable to call them the same. In the first place, they are reduced from thirty-nine to twenty-five. Secondly, of such of our Articles as are retained, many are so altered, that they no longer contain the same sentiments which they were designed originally to convey^a: and lastly, of those

were to be asked, whether he did not intend that the 17th Article should be understood according to the System of Calvin? he would be astonished at the question. He would tell us that he meant to refer us solely to the Scriptures; and he would add, that in the sense in which we conscientiously believe Scripture speaks of Predestination, in that sense we should subscribe to the doctrine. It is remarkable, that when the Bishops and Divines who were imprisoned in Queen Mary's reign, drew up a Confession of their Faith, not a word occurs concerning Predestination. See Strype's Eccles. Memoirs, vol. iii. p. 140. and Appen. p. 42.

^a The following may serve as a specimen to shew the manner in which Mr. Wesley has altered some of our Articles:

omitted, many relate to such points of faith and doctrine as are indispensable, not merely to a Reformed, but even to a Christian Church. The two following instances will be sufficient to prove the truth of this assertion.

If our Church were no longer to insist on the necessity of believing that Christ was alone without sin, would it not be said, that we rejected one of the fundamentals of Christianity? inasmuch as we are able to argue from this point to the divine nature of our Redeemer; from which only we infer the meritoriousness

Of Baptism, according to Mr. Wesley.

Baptism is not only a sign of profession, and mark of difference, whereby Christians are distinguished from others that are not baptized; but it is also a sign of regeneration, or the new Birth. The Baptism of young children is to be retained in the Church.

Of Baptism, according to the Church of England.

Baptism is not only a sign of profession, and mark of difference, whereby Christian men are discerned from others that be not christened: but it is also a sign of Regeneration or new Birth, whereby, as by an instrument, they that receive Baptism rightly are grafted into the Church: the promises of the forgiveness of sin, and of our adoption to be the sons of God by the Holy Ghost, are visibly signed and sealed: faith is confirmed, and grace increased by virtue of prayer unto God. The Baptism of young Children is in any wise to be retained in the Church, as most agreeable with the institution of Christ.

of his death and sufferings, when he gave himself to be “ a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice “ for the sins of the whole world.” Yet the fifteenth Article, which asserts, “ that Christ “ alone was without sin,” is one of those which have been rejected from the Articles of this new Communion. Again. If we were to maintain that every man shall be saved by following the law and light of nature, we should deservedly “ be had accursed,” as our Church strongly, but properly expresses it; since it would then follow as a consequence, that there was no reason why our Blessed Lord should have been *bruised for our iniquities*. For which cause our Church asserts, in her eighteenth Article, that “ Eternal Salvation is to be obtained only by the name of Christ.” Yet this also is one which the Founder of the Sect in question has rejected from his Articles of Religion.

Omitting therefore to insist on the absurdity of saying that any thing, whereof part has been taken away, remains nevertheless the same; we would only ask, whether a Communion, which deliberately removes from its Articles of Religion, two so highly important as those which have been just enumerated, can be said to maintain the same religious opinions with another Communion,

which considers those doctrines to be fundamental points in Christianity, and in consequence requires from all her members the most unequivocal acknowledgment of their truth ! There is not room for a moment's hesitation : they must be two distinct Communions.

If then these circumstances are duly considered ; if we reflect, first, that by one of the Founders of this Sect, one of the Articles of the Church of England is employed to enforce, as the term of Communion, a particular doctrine, which certainly it never was designed to impose as such : if it be considered, secondly, that by the other, Articles have been framed, varying in many essential points from those to which we subscribe ; how can either of them maintain, that their adherence to our Articles supplies an argument to prove that they have not separated from our Communion ?

And here, having shewn that the assertions advanced by these two Sectaries are absolutely without foundation, whether with respect to their use of our Liturgy, or their adherence to our Articles ; it may be proper to suggest, that had their conduct in these points been perfectly unexceptionable, still this alone would not have been sufficient to exculpate them

them from the charge of Schism. It is true, that every one who adopts with sincerity our Liturgy and our Articles, must be allowed to conform strictly, in points of doctrine, to the Church of England; but then it is equally true, that he may still be guilty of Schism in points of Government and Discipline^b. For we established in the preceding Lecture, that it was the act of forming a new Communion, even though the doctrines taught in it were not in any shape different from those professed by the Church; it was the saying, *I am of Paul, and I of Apollos*; it was the making religious parties, that constituted in the Apostle's mind the offence of Schism^c.

If then it was Schism against the Church of Corinth, to call one congregation after the name of one Leader, and a second after that of another; when two individuals form separate congregations in their own name, in violation of the Unity of the Church of Eng-

^b When we considered Mr. Whitefield's argument, which he drew from the strict manner in which he adhered, as he thought, to the 17th Article, we did it, not because the argument was in itself a just one, but because we were willing to meet the question on his own grounds. A simple reference to the 36th Canon will prove, that any person, who, having been ordained in our Communion, gives up its Liturgy, has broken the covenant which he has made with the Church of England.

^c See page 94.

land, and in direct opposition to its authority, surely there can be no room for hesitation in pronouncing them guilty of Schism. For, to reason from the analogy of Civil Government, if a body of men were to take possession of several towns, and having dismissed the lawfully appointed officers, were to elect new magistrates of their own; if then they should argue, that in doing this they were not guilty of Rebellion, because they continued to administer the same laws by which the community at large was governed, would not this mode of reasoning be considered as absurd? Surely Rebellion is implied in the unwarranted assumption of power to govern on the part of individuals, without any reference to the laws which may or may not be administered. Exactly thus in the present case, laying aside all reference to the Liturgy and Articles, an adherence to these, or a departure from them, little affects the question: if the authors of this Sect performed the Offices of our Church in a manner forbidden by its Canons; if they administered its ordinances in places which were not set apart to that use; and, above all, if they appointed others (no matter under what title or pretext) to administer things spiritual, when the Church only can authorize any one to

exer-

exercise these functions of the Priesthood, these points are sufficient to establish against them the charge of Schism^d.

According to their common confession, whether they subscribe to our Articles, or

^d Should it be suggested, that perhaps neither Mr. Wesley nor Mr. Whitefield considered these acts, whether taken separately or collectively, to be positive acts of Schism, we reply, that with unfeigned sincerity we wish that such an excuse could have been urged in their behalf. The following quotations will prove, but too clearly, that they knew the full meaning and consequence of their actions.

Mr. C. Wesley having been much affected by the admonitions which had been given him by Abp. Potter, concerning the irregularity of his conduct, "Mr. Whitefield urged him to "preach in the fields the next Sunday: by this step he would "break down the bridge; render his retreat difficult, or impossible; and be forced to fight his way forward in the work "of the Ministry. This advice he followed. I prayed, says "he, and went forth in the name of Jesus Christ." *Whitehead's Life of Wesley*, vol. i. p. 204.

When Dr. Coke went, ordained by Mr. Wesley, as Bishop to America, he preached and published a sermon in defence of Mr. Wesley's conduct; in which are these words: "Though "we admire the Liturgy of the Church of England, and are "determined to retain it with a few alterations; we cannot, "we will not, hold connexion with them, till the Holy Spirit "of God has made them see and feel the evil of the practices "and the importance of the doctrines above mentioned. And "as for this Schism (if it must have the name) we are cheer- "fully ready to answer at the bar of God." *Hampson's Life of Wesley*, vol. ii. p. 188. Though Dr. Coke was the reputed author of the sermon above quoted, Mr. W. himself was supposed to have written it. See *Hampson ut sup.* p. 191.

whether

whether they use their own, they acknowledge that to be the Church, in which not only “the word of God is preached, but also
“his Sacraments are duly administered, according to Christ’s ordinance^e ;” and how can this be duly done, unless it be by those who have received a commission according to Christ’s ordinance? For if it is impossible that the laws of a kingdom can be duly administered, unless it be by those who are appointed to administer them; or if a will cannot be duly administered, unless it be by such as have been nominated to carry it into effect; it must be considered as necessary towards the due administration of the Sacraments, that those only should be permitted to officiate who have been authorized to do so^f.

Of this difficulty the Authors of the Sect were sensible. To confer on others the power of performing such sacred rites, was a

^e Though Mr. Wesley uses these words in his 13th Article “of the Church,” nevertheless, being attacked by his friends with having separated from our Communion, when he ordained, and sent Bishops to America, he changed his definition, and said “the Church is merely a company of believers, and insisted that from this Church he did not separate.” *Hampson’s Life of Wesley*, vol. ii. p. 199.

^f See Potter on Church Government, ch. v. and Leslie’s Works, vol. ii. p. 715.

step too daring to be at once attempted: for their followers to assume it of themselves, would be to violate the express commands of Scripture, and to make themselves Priests of God, which honour no *one taketh to himself, but he that is called, as was Aaron*^g. When therefore any person who had been regularly ordained a Minister in our Church became one of this new Communion, its members availed themselves of this opportunity to receive the Sacrament from him: when such were wanting, then, not as a test of Unity, or as a seal of fellowship, but from mere necessity, they were advised to receive the Sacrament at the hands of the regular Ministry, and in the appointed places of public Worship^h.

^g Heb. v. 4. The desire to avail themselves of ordination was so great, that a Bishop of the Greek Church in Crete, called Erasmus, happening to come to London, several of Mr. Wesley's Preachers took that opportunity to be ordained by him. "When it is considered that neither did the Bishop understand English, nor his candidates Greek, we may presume that the examination, and the rest of the ceremony on that occasion, must have been particularly instructive." *Hampson's Life of Wesley*, vol. iii. p. 188.

^h Although the Founders of Methodism insisted so much on their conformity to the Establishment, because they urged their followers to receive the Sacrament in the Church; they could not well have been ignorant, that they were acting in direct opposition to the 27th Canon, which enjoins "That Schismatics are not to be admitted to the Communion." But in fact, "occasional

"con-

It was not probable that they should long respect a restraint which many asserted was both sinful and superstitious, and which all acknowledged to be inconvenient. There were not wanting therefore those who boldly proposed to break through it; and if others resisted this latter measure, it was rather because they looked upon it as inexpedient than as unlawful¹. The question however did not

“conformity” is in itself a notion so absurd and contradictory, that no person who is dispassionate, and capable of reasoning, will, it is to be presumed, insist upon it. See it considered in Bingham’s *French Church’s Apology*, B. i. ch. 6. a work well deserving the attention of all dissenters from the Church of England; and in Mr. Daubeney’s *Guide to the Church*, p. 273.

¹ The manner in which this partial communion with the Established Church was regarded by some of this new Sect cannot be better described than in the words of Mr. Kilham: “If reason and Scripture govern, we shall have considerable alterations, and a partial separation from the national Church. O that God would reconcile the minds of the Methodists to those alterations that must undoubtedly sooner or later take place—the curse of God is upon us, and we cannot prosper till the Lord pardon our having bowed in the house of Rimmon.” *Life of Mr. A. Kilham*, p. 49. Again: “I had several warm contests with a friend, because I would not have the child baptized in the usual way. I hope God will open the eyes of the Methodists, to see their sin and folly in their inconsistent connexion with the Church.” p. 47. Mr. Wesley himself is described as having “*laid aside his last portion of bigotry*” in this particular about 1764. *Coke’s Life of Wesley*, p. 415. The extreme animosity with which this point was prosecuted may be

seen

long remain a matter of dispute. Toward the close of his life, the Founder of the Sect deliberately assumed the Apostolical authority; and, sanctioned by no law, human or divine, as Christ sent the Apostles, and as the Father had sent Christ, so did he arrogate to himself the power of sending forth his Disciples to preach the Gospel; to give the Sacraments, and to ordain Ministers in future; using these solemn words of Ordination, “Receive
“ the Holy Ghost, by the imposition of our
“ hands.”

All circumstances considered, this probably is the most flagrant attempt to violate Church Unity, that has ever occurred in the history of Christianity. It was not an act conceived in a moment of more than ordinary Enthusiasm, when the reason might have been overborne, and the consequences resulting from the undertaking overlooked; neither was it done by a person, in whom ignorance might in some degree have palliated the offence. It was the act of one who had foreseen and calculated the remotest contingencies; it was done in opposition to the earnest remonstrances of many of his friends; it was publicly

seen in Mr. Kilham's *Life*, *passim*, particularly in the preface; and in Myles's *Chron. Hist. of Meth.* p. 176, et seq.

avowed,

avowed, and publicly defended ; and, that nothing might be wanting to give it solemnity, a new Ordination Service was compiled ; new names were invented for this Ministry ; the title of Superintendant and Elder were substituted for those of Priest and Bishop ; and in some places the very functions to be exercised were changed ^k: as if it had been intended, by so many marked distinctions, to preclude the possibility of confounding this new Priesthood with that of the Church of England.

Nor are these the only points of variation deserving notice. In fact, it is not merely in the external form of Ordination, or in the names of Office, that our Ministry differs from that of this new Sect ; it is in the very principles themselves on which it is establish-

^k Thus in Mr. Wesley's Communion Service the Elder is not permitted to pronounce absolution ; and has liberty given him, " if he see it expedient, to put up a prayer extempore." For an account of the whole transaction respecting this assumption of power to ordain ; of the warmth with which it was opposed by some of the connexion ; of the bitterness with which it was defended by others ; of the clandestine manner in which it was conducted (the first Ordination being made secretly, in a private chamber) ; and of the arguments by which it was defended, see Coke's Life of Wesley, p. 458. et seq. Whitehead's, vol. ii. p. 415. et seq. Hampson's, vol. ii. ch. v. and Myles's Chron. Hist. of Meth. p. 125.

ed. Thus in their Ordination Service all mention of obedience to the Civil and Canon Law is omitted. The Nicene Creed (which is particularly introduced into our Office, that the Ministry might avow not only their assent to the general principles of the Christian Faith, but that they might formally declare their reprobation of such heresies as were condemned at the Council of Nice) is rejected: the oath of obedience to the Episcopal Church is removed; and finally, the acknowledgment of the King's Supremacy is abolished.

On the respective importance of these several omissions, it is not our intention to dilate. It will be sufficient to observe, that some of them, if permitted to operate to their full extent, are evidently such as would tend to destroy utterly the very existence of the Christian Church. The last omission however is one which ought not be slightly passed over; for it is intimately connected with our present enquiry, and leads to consequences which would inevitably shake the foundation, not only of our present Ecclesiastical Establishment, but of the very Reformation itself; the corner-stone of which was laid in the dispassionate assertion of this just principle; That the National Church was free from the jurisdiction of all foreign authority; and that,

under Christ, it was subject to him alone, whom Divine Providence had entrusted with the defence of our Civil Rights.

But perhaps it may be urged, that this last omission could not have been made designedly; that therefore it must be attributed to accident, and ought to be considered merely as an oversight.

How can this possibly have been the case? I would only appeal to any rational being, whether it is likely that a person deliberately framing a new system, should forget to take notice of any principle, on which he intended that the system should be built. Some inaccuracies indeed will always be found in human compositions: but surely no one, giving, as it were, laws to a new Communion, omits, by accident, to specify any point which he wishes should be thought essential to it.

There is a circumstance however, that seems to place it beyond all doubt that the omission above noted was the effect of design.

Our Church has framed her thirty-seventh Article expressly to recognize the King's Supremacy, not only over the Civil, but also over the Ecclesiastical Estates: the latter, in consequence of the Papal Usurpation, having enjoyed, in some respects, almost an exemption from the Temporal power. It was to remedy

medy this insufferable evil therefore, and many others of equal magnitude, that our Reformers, with the utmost precision, declared, that “the Bishop of Rome has no jurisdiction within “this realm.” Yet the Founder of this new Sect, even in his Articles of Religion, has studiously avoided to make the slightest mention of these points¹. What are we to conclude from this twofold omission? Are we to suppose that he really favoured the doctrines of the Papal Church? Certainly not. This is a conclusion which every principle of reason, as well as charity, forbids us to form. We may conjecture however, that on the one hand a mistaken notion of the nature of religious liberty made him think that there was no point in which the Civil power ought to interfere with the regulation of spiritual concerns^m: and on the other hand, that a

¹ Mr. Wesley’s Article runs thus: “The King’s Majesty, “with his Parliament, hath the chief power in all the British “dominions; unto whom the chief government of all estates “in all causes doth appertain; and is not, nor ought to be, “subject to any foreign jurisdiction.” Let the literal and strict meaning of this Article be considered; let it be compared with our 37th, on the Civil Magistrate; let the force of the words “with his Parliament,” be considered; and then let it be asked, whether the scope and design of the two Articles be not altogether different.

^m “To go a little deeper into this matter of *legal Establish-*

political regard to the interests of his new Communion led him to insist on nothing that might offend the advocates of any other systemⁿ. But we have not so learned Christ.

ment. Do you think that the King and Parliament have a "right to prescribe to me what Pastor I shall use?" &c. See Mr. Wesley's Letter to Mr. Walker, *Coke's Life of Wesley*, p. 313.

ⁿ If the nature of the several omissions and alterations made in our Liturgy be considered, this inference will appear perhaps to be just. The permission to use extemporaneous prayer into a set form of prayer; the removal of the signing with the sign of the Cross, and of Sponsors in Baptism; the not insisting upon a formal renunciation of the claims of the Bishop of Rome; the discarding of the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds; the not requiring an acknowledgment of the King's Supremacy: these and the various other changes made in the Articles, afford such a latitude, that there is hardly any Schismatic, hardly even any Heretic, who might not with a safe conscience become a member of Mr. Wesley's Communion. Of opinions, by which is meant those peculiar tenets which distinguish one Communion from another, he thus delivers himself: "I will not quarrel with you about any opinion: believe them true or false!—I am sick of opinions; I am weary to bear with them; my soul loaths this frothy food." *Third Appeal*, p. 135. And again: "'Tis a poor excuse to say 'O but the people are brought into several erroneous opinions.' It matters not a straw whether they are or no: (I speak of such opinions as do not touch the foundation;) 'tis scarce worth while to spend ten words about it." *Ibid.* p. 137. But in another place he even seems to give up fundamentals: "The points we chiefly insisted upon were, that Orthodoxy, or *Right Opinions* is, at best, a very slender part of Religion, *if it can be allowed to be any part of it at all,*" &c. *Wesley's Works*, vol. xv. p. 195.

We believe that there is a submission to the powers that are, which the Church of Christ is required to pay; we believe that there is a duty which we owe to Truth, superior to the dictates of policy, or, what is now so vaguely called, Liberality of Sentiment.

Our benevolence towards the good of every Communion is both warm and extensive; nevertheless we disclaim those errors which they each respectively maintain: and among these we particularly include the errors of that Church, whose corruptions were the source whence chiefly those waters of bitterness flowed, which overwhelmed the Christian world. We will readily allow that the Church of Rome (that venerable Communion, which, though tremendously corrupt in some instances, still continues to possess the essentials necessary to constitute the Apostolic Church) has been rendered of late a spectacle deserving our compassion: we will grant too, that she may become, even still more than she is at present, the object of our pity rather than of our fear. But there is no state of insignificance, to which she can be reduced, that will ever authorise us, so long as she maintains her old pretensions, to remove from our Articles the solemn abjuration of her power; can ever make us cease to avow an

eternal opposition to her claims. These are the principles on which is raised the goodly structure of our Spiritual Liberties. These we bind as a *signet upon our hand*, and keep as the *frontlet between our eyes*^o; principles so sacred, that were any doctrines subversive of them again pressed upon our consciences, with humility and fervency we pray, that the same strength, which was vouchsafed to the faithful Servants of God in times past, might be imparted to us also; that, like them, we might be enabled to maintain the cause of truth, even under the severest trials which human nature can encounter.

Sufficient has been now adduced to prove that the Authors of this Sect were guilty of Schism against the Church of England: sufficient has been also said to shew that they could not, with any propriety, give their congregations the sacred name of the Church of God. Those Communion alone are justly so called, which in their ministry, as well as in their doctrines, are *built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone*^p.

Having then established the first point of our proposed enquiry; and having shewn,

^o Deut. vi. 8.

^p Ep. ii. 20.

that, even according to their own confessions, the persons whose conduct we have examined were guilty of Schism from the Church of England, we should now proceed to prove that their Schism originated in Enthusiasm. But as this point will require to be considered somewhat at large, we must refer it to the ensuing Lecture. In the mean time we will briefly point out a few particulars, which may tend much to illustrate all that has been already advanced.

When we read the public protestations of innocence which were made by the persons in question; and when we are told what anxiety they expressed to remove from themselves the imputation of Schism; we are led to conclude that they must have considered this offence to be, what the Scriptures describe it to be, of a nature peculiarly sinful. When however we obtain what may be called their private opinions, we find that they looked upon Schism to be an ideal offence; and that they regarded it as a term more calculated to impose on the weak, than to influence the conduct of the wise.

What conclusion are we to draw from this contradiction? Are we to suppose that, like the mystics of old, this Sect had its exoteric and its esoteric doctrine; one for the congregation

gation in public; another for the scholar in private? We hardly know how to charge them with so great disingenuousness; and yet they themselves have told us, “that many of
 “their leading preachers determined to make
 “laws mean one thing to themselves, and
 “another to the people^q.” Be this, however, as it may, the opinion concerning Schism entertained by him, who is called by the Sect, their Venerable Father in the Gospel, is frequently detailed; and this is to decide the question. What shall we say then, when we find that he treats the subject with studied levity and contempt; and that he sometimes talks of Schism with such wanton irreverence, that it does not even become us to repeat his words in the house of God^r? There are occa-

^q Preface to the Methodist's Monitor, p. 5.

^r “Why I did once myself rejoice to hear (says a grave Citizen, with an *air* of great *importance*) that so many sinners
 “were reformed, till I found they were only turning from
 “swearing and drunkenness into the no less damnable sin of
 “Schism. Do you know what you say? You have, I am
 “afraid, a confused huddle of ideas in your head; and I doubt
 “you have not capacity to clear them up yourself: however,
 “I will try. What is Schism? I ask, because I have found by
 “repeated experiments, that a common English Tradesman receives no more light, when he hears or reads ‘This is Schism,’
 “than if he heard or read,

“*Bombalio, firilol, clangor, taratantara, murmur.*

“Honest

sions however, on which he assumes a tone of greater earnestness, and then he declares, that “ the Civil power has no right to interfere with the appointment of Ministers: that if it had this right, we are to reject the Ministers thus appointed, unless we know that they are sent from God: nay, that even if we are convinced that they are actually sent of God, it will nevertheless be sinful to receive them, should we believe that another Pastor is more profitable to our souls^s. ”

Of these assertions we need hardly observe, that the first is an evident mis-statement of the question; that the second is an arbitrary and an unfounded assumption; and that the third is almost impious. We cannot forbear to remark however, that, if no law whatever has enforced the observance of Church Unity; if not merely the choice of our establishment,

“ Honest neighbour, don’t be angry. Lay down your hammer, “ and let us talk a little on this head.” *Third Appeal*, p. 125. These Appeals are recommended “ on account of the power, “ yet sobriety of love highly manifest in them, to all who desire to know what spirit Mr. Wesley was of, while contending, almost against the whole world, for the truth of God.” *Coke’s Life of Wesley*, p. 488. Most earnestly do we concur in the recommendation, convinced that no serious person can read them, and not perceive the weakness of the cause which they were written to support.

^s *Coke’s Life of Wesley*, p. 313.

but the degree of obedience we will pay that establishment depends entirely upon our own good pleasure; if the validity of the priesthood is to be regulated by the capriciousness of our feelings, so that it shall be even sinful in us to receive God's acknowledged Ministers, if contrary to our own inclinations; it then becomes mere mockery to express any concern at the imputation of Schism: so that we cannot but be surprised to find that the Authors of the Sect assure us, that they wept and prayed unto the Lord, to prevent separation among themselves^t; and that they desired their followers never to quit the Established Church until they were compelled.

The meaning of this language is obvious. It courts the evil which it seems to deprecate. And as in the establishing of their Sect, persecution for the sake of Christ (such was the name given to that opposition which they met with) was sought for with an avidity little consistent with Christian Prudence, and still less perhaps with Christian Charity; it leaves too much room to apprehend, that it

^t "It would have melted any heart to have heard Mr. C. Wesley and me weeping after prayer, that if possible the breach might be prevented." *Gillics' Life of Whitefield*, p. 69.

was courted, in order to obtain in the eyes of the multitude a popular argument in the defence of their cause. Thus hoping they might be considered to be the highly favoured followers of the persecuted Saviour, of whom it was foretold, that they should be blessed, when they suffered affliction for the sake of Christ^u.

But the Rulers of our Church foresaw the probable issue of this contest: they foresaw also that no good could be hoped, and that much harm might be feared, were they to be the first to fix the time of separation. That time they were conscious could not be far removed; and they justly argued, that, if they waited until these Schismatics themselves

^u Matt. v. 10. When therefore, they were favourably received in a place, they wished for opposition, that they might be sure that God was with them: and when they had provoked it, they then blessed the Lord, because he had thought them worthy to suffer persecution. Thus Mr. Whitefield writes: "Thousands
" went to hear me preach; but orders were given by the Minister, that I should not preach in his Church; which rejoiced me greatly. *Lord, why dost thou thus honour me?* We
" have not had such a continued presence of God amongst us,
" as we have had, since I was threatened to be excommunicated." *Whitefield's Third Journal*, p. 35. So at another time, when bound over to appear at the sessions for having been concerned in a libel, he exclaims, "Blessed be God, for *this*
" further honour. My soul rejoices in it. I think *this* may be
" called PERSECUTION." *Seventh Journal*, p. 81.

should

should announce their Seceſſion, then there would be ſuch evidence of the real criminality of their conduct, as would convince every one who ſhould feel the leaſt attachment to our Eſtabliſhment, as an Apoſtolical Church, of the ſinfulneſs of entering into that Schiſmatical Communion. Not from inattention therefore, but from prudence, were the Authors of this new Sect permitted to profeſs adherence to the Eſtabliſhed Church, even while they had manifeſtly ſeparated from it. But in the mean time a firm reliance was placed in the piety, and in the wiſdom of an enlightened and an Apoſtolical Miniſtry, who were called upon to oppoſe, by the purity of their zeal and the ſoundneſs of their doctrine, the progreſs of a Sect which had riſen into notice by unjuſtly aſſerting, that the Church of England had departed equally from her firſt faith and her firſt love *.

All that was then foreſeen has been ſince accompliſhed. Whatever interpretation may be given to ſome part of their conduct, the deliberate aſſumption of the Prieſthood,

* The mild and conciliating manner, in which the Rulers of our Church conducted themſelves towards the Leaders of this Sect, is atteſted by their own Biographer. See Whitehead's Life of Weſley, vol. i. p. 200 and 203.

unfancioned by divine authority, whilst it establishes the charge of Schism in such a manner as to need no further proof, involves those who are guilty of it in a responsibility the most fearful which the mind of man can conceive.

Be it not thought that this is in any shape exaggerated language. If it be declared, that an admission into the true Church shall secure to all its members the certainty of the means of salvation; and if it be promised, that, when thus admitted, they become the Heirs and the Children of God; what have not they to answer for, who persuade men that these inestimable benefits are to be obtained by entering into a Communion, which has received no authority to dispense them? Again. If it be the exalted office of the Christian Priesthood not only to administer the appointed means and pledges of grace, but even to speak peace to the penitent, and to pronounce assured absolution of sin; what have not they to apprehend, who, unauthorized to make the assertion, have nevertheless pretended that their ministry will avail to procure this promised blessing attached to the Christian Covenant?

On this very awful subject indeed; on the subject of a Priesthood selected from among *men to be Ambassadors in Christ's stead*; Ministers

nisters *unto whom the word of Reconciliation hath been committed*^y, and who therefore are qualified to perform functions of the most sacred importance, nothing can be known by us, but that which has been revealed. For how can any effort of human reason determine the manner in which the Almighty is willing to be approached? how can it ascertain that the employment of any particular means should secure the certainty of an attendant blessing? We are bound therefore in prudence, as well as in duty, to *turn neither to the right hand, nor to the left*, in a point where nothing depends upon ourselves, and where every thing is the result of free Grace on the part of God.

For which cause, though Uzzah, who intended to support the Ark, received a punishment nearly similar to that which Corah met with, when he rebelliously attempted to usurp the Priesthood; nevertheless we cannot but perceive in both instances the justice of the dispensation^z. God having appointed not

^y 2 Cor. v. 19, 20.

^z “What then was the sin of Uzzah? That the Ark of God was not carried on the shoulders of Levites, was no less the fault of Ahio, and the rest of their brethren, only Uzzah is stricken. They sinned in negligence; he in presumption. The best intention cannot excuse, much less warrant us in
“unlawful

only the means by which, but also the instruments by whom, he will convey blessings to his creatures, it becomes not them to apply to other means, or to select other instruments. Should they do so, they are to remember, that whether their motive was an over officious zeal, or an overbearing pride, still, in either case, they have contracted the guilt of disobedience.

Perhaps it was a conviction of this truth, that induced the Founder of the Sect before us, to remove from his Liturgy whatever related to that power of pronouncing absolution of sin, which by its divine Author has been annexed to the Christian Priesthood. Probably he argued, that a renunciation of this high privilege was prudent, inasmuch as it might prevent censure, and involve him apparently in

“ unlawful actions. Where we do aught in faith, it pleaseth
 “ our good God to wink at and pity our weaknesses : but if we
 “ dare to present God with the well-meant services of our own
 “ making, we run into the indignation of God. There is no-
 “ thing more dangerous than to be our own carvers in matter
 “ of devotion.” *Bp. Hall’s Works*, vol. i. p. 1094. See *Contem-
 plation on the Leprosy of Uzziah*. Ibid. p. 1283. The conclusion
 of which is both striking and just. “ Uzziah ceased not to be
 “ a king, when he began to be a leper ; neither is it otherwise,
 “ O God, betwixt thee and us. If we be once a royal generation
 “ unto thee, our leprogies may deform, they shall not de-
 “ throne us.”

a smaller

a smaller degree of responsibility. He forgot, however, that, by adopting this line of conduct, he was in fact acknowledging the badness of his cause; and that at the same time he was giving up one of the characteristic points of Christianity.

Forgiveness of sin was a doctrine about which the Jews themselves appear to have formed no just or adequate conception^a. Among the Heathen however, as might be expected, it was altogether unknown. In some of their systems indeed, it was taught, that the souls of men could not be admitted into a state of future bliss, until the stain of contracted guilt had been thoroughly purged away. But this was done, either by means of a purifying fire, or by the slower progress of repeated transmigrations of the soul. It seems never to *have entered into their hearts to conceive*, that sin was to be obliterated by an act of free mercy^b.

^a Hence arose the frequent indignation of the Jews against our blessed Lord, when he declared to several persons, that their sins were forgiven. It is remarkable however, that he persisted in employing those express words, and that he graciously assigned the reason, "That ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins." Matth. ix. 6.

^b Vid. Virgil. *Æneid.* lib. vi. c. 739. Plato de Rep. lib. x. ed. Bipon. vol. vii. p. 322.

It was to announce this doctrine, and to secure the accomplishment of its object, that our Blessed Lord took our nature upon him. To preach therefore pardon for sin is the distinctive characteristic of the Christian Religion; to convey the assurance of that pardon the distinctive office of the Christian Priesthood. If then we disclaim the exercise of that authority which our Divine Master communicated to his Ministry, when he said, "*Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them^c*," we not only render his gracious intention of none effect in this instance, but we can hardly be said to exercise any function that may not be performed equally by the priest of Natural Religion.

If then with such earnest anxiety we would endeavour to dissuade the Schismatic from arrogating to himself the holy office of the Christian Priesthood, it is not that we wish to confine that honour to ourselves: it is because we know that he must either exercise an imperfect Ministry, by omitting part of its highest functions; or that, by acting without due authority, he must render it for ever doubtful what blessings are to be expected by those who have been induced to acknow-

^c John xx. 23.

ledge him as a steward in the household of God.

If too we maintain that those only ought to discharge the ministerial office, who have received their commission by Apostolical Ordination, it is because the power belonging to that office being delegated, mankind can have no proof whereby to ascertain who may exercise it, unless it be by that of regular succession, traced from us to the Apostles; from them to God ^d.

^d Nothing can be more fully to the point than the following words of St. Clement : Και οἱ ἀποστολῶν ἡμῶν ἐγνώσαν δια τῆς Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὅτι εἰς ἐσά ἐπὶ τῆς οὐνομαλίας τῆς ἐπισκοπῆς. Δια ταύτην ἐν τῇ αἰῶνιαν προΐωσιν εὐληφότες τελείαν, κατέστησαν τὰς περὶ τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, καὶ μετὰ τὴν ἐπινομήν διδάσκουσιν, ὅπως ἐὰν κοιμηθῶσιν, διαδεξύνται ἑτέροι δὲ δικαιοσύνῃ ἀνδρες τὴν λειτουργίαν αὐτῶν. 1 Ep. ad Corin. c. 44. This being the language of one who lived and conversed with the Apostles, must we not be grieved to hear how irreverently this point is treated by the Methodists? “ In Mr. Wesley’s “ last days, or second childhood, two or three persons had prevailed on him privately to ordain them, for the purpose of “ reviving after his death the *old farce of uninterrupted succession*. “ *Days of ignorance* have rested much on the supposed uninterrupted succession from the great head of the Church, and the “ poor simple honest Methodists were again to be *duped by that “ senseless tale*.” *Preface to M. A. Kilham’s Life*, p. 11. As for Mr. Wesley’s sentiments on this head, they seem to be comprised in the following words : “ The uninterrupted succession “ of Bishops is a point that has long been given up by the ablest “ Protestant Defenders of Episcopacy.” *Hampson’s Life of Wesley*, vol. ii. p. 185. We cannot but feel regret, as well as astonishment,

It is not then for the Schismatic, it is for us to complain, who are so little understood, and so much misrepresented. We wish not to restrict the mercies of the Most High! God forbid. *Would that all the Lord's people were Prophets*^c, if such were his sacred will. It is the forwardness of our own imaginations that we seek to restrain, and the deceitfulness of the human heart.

Conscious that we are all of us encompassed by the same infirmities, did we imagine that any licence were allowed us in the particular points in question, we should lay ourselves open to the dangerous suggestions of spiritual pride, and soon might take delight (as evidently all Enthusiasts do) in acting by a power superior to all controul. In which case, like them, we should be led to prefer systems of our own contrivance, however imperfect, to the purest that could be imparted by Divine Wisdom.

These are the reasons therefore why we of the Established Church revert continually to the precept which the blessed Jesus has delivered in the text. We are willing that our

ment, to think that any one should have ventured to have made an assertion so unfounded as the above.

^c Numbers xi. 29.

love should be manifested by the humility with which we walk with him in the path of his commandments: and though it may seem paradoxical to some, we nevertheless assert, that this humility is shewn as clearly in maintaining the privileges that have been granted to us, as in forbearing to claim such as have been denied; evermore with gratitude confessing, that if it was merciful on the part of God to reveal himself to us, by means of his Son, it was hardly less merciful to prescribe the manner, and to appoint the persons, by whom we should continue to approach him.

Impressed with these sentiments, should the strict rule of duty, by which we strive to regulate our conduct, provoke the censure of those who, in the spirit of Enthusiasm, would condemn all service as insincere, unless it exceed the limit of prescribed obedience; knowing that hereafter we shall not be ashamed, we nevertheless will steadily persevere in setting *our face as the flint*^f, to oppose their innovations. And as we remark, that all things in nature are lovely or deformed only so far as they observe, or depart from that law which the Author of Nature has appointed for them

^f Isaiah l. 7.

to observe; so in the Church we perceive, that whatever she has experienced, either of honour or of dishonour, has uniformly proceeded from the fidelity with which she has obeyed, or the levity with which she has forsaken, the commandments of her God. Therefore, as the saints in Heaven humble themselves, and *cast their crowns before the throne*^g on which Christ sitteth, so do we lay down at his feet every proud thought, and every vain imagination, that exalteth itself against his blessed will; convinced that, when we obey him the most faithfully, we shall be found to have loved him the most sincerely^h.

^g Revel. iv. 10.

^h Much stress having been laid in this Lecture on Mr. Wesley's assumption of the power to ordain Bishops and Ministers for his Societies in America; the Reader is desired to refer to Hampson's Life of Wesley, vol. ii. p. 171. where the whole transaction is considered at length, and many just remarks are made upon it. As the book is not perhaps in every person's hand, the following extracts may not be unacceptable. Speaking of the reasons that induced Mr. Wesley to establish, what he called, the Church in America, Dr. Coke, in his sermon (or rather Mr. W. who is supposed to be its real Author) says, "Blessed be God, and praised be his holy name, that the memorable revolution (in America) has struck off these intolerable fetters; and broken the Anti-Christian union which before subsisted between Church and State. And had there been no other advantage arising from that glorious epoch, this itself, I believe, would have made ample compensation for all the cala-

“ mities of the War. One happy consequence of which was
“ the expulsion of most of those hirelings (the Clergy of the
“ Church of England,)—of which the Society of Methodists in
“ general have till lately *professed* themselves a part.” P. 181. et
seq. Of Mr. W.’s authority, it is said, “ We are fully persuad-
“ ed, there is no Church office which he judges expedient for
“ the welfare of the people entrusted to his charge, but, as es-
“ sential to his station, he has power to ordain.” P. 184. It is
added, that Mr. W. “ saw it was his duty to form his Society
“ in America into an independent Church.” Ibid. And one
of the reasons he assigned why he chose rather to ordain Mi-
nisters himself than to apply to the Bishop of London for his
ordination, was, “ that had the Bishop ordained, he would have
“ expected to govern them.” Ibid. p. 192.

SERMON IV.

JOHN x. 37, 38.

IF I DO NOT THE WORKS OF MY FATHER, BELIEVE ME NOT. BUT IF I DO, THOUGH YE BELIEVE NOT ME, BELIEVE THE WORKS.

IT was asserted in the preceding Lecture, that the persons, whose conduct we had undertaken to examine, were guilty of separation from the Church of England: and the evidence, which was then adduced, may have been judged perhaps sufficient to prove the truth of that position. But we asserted also, that their Schism originated in Enthusiasm. This point is to be now considered. And as in the first instance our enquiry was regulated by that definition of Schism, which we had previously obtained from consulting Scripture; so in the present it shall be governed by a constant reference to those principles, which have been already established concerning the nature of Enthusiasm.

We considered then Enthusiasm to be a delusion produced by the vehement action of the imagination; which, under certain circumstances, is able to impress upon the mind a belief in divine communications, when in reality no such communications have been granted.

This was our general definition: and if we did not attempt to specify the precise nature of the communications, a belief in which would constitute Enthusiasm, it was because these will perpetually vary according to the disposition of each individual.

Whether the persons before us were Enthusiasts in every particular to which Enthusiastic delusion can apply, we neither assert, nor enquire. This mode of treating the question would lead us far beyond our proposed limits. Nor will it be necessary. It will be sufficient to prove, that in the great leading principle that governed their conduct, that principle on which their claim to attention and acceptation was founded, they acted under the influence of a deluded imagination.

The point then which we propose to consider is this. As the authors of this new Sect believed and asserted themselves to have been the peculiar messengers of God, raised

up to answer the special designs of his Providence, we are to enquire what proofs they brought to establish pretensions of such vast importance. Should it be found that these proofs are weak, unfounded, delusory, and altogether unlike those which have been adduced on similar occasions by persons who have received, confessedly, a Divine commission; we then shall be compelled to rank them among those numerous false Prophets, who have mistaken the suggestions of Enthusiastic delusion, for the sober and sacred inspirations of God.

Such then shall be the proposed object of our enquiry; and to guide us in it, no principle can be adopted more unexceptionable than that which is pointed out to us in the words of the text.

When the blessed Jesus appeared at Jerusalem, and asserted that he was sent from the Father; the greatness of the authority which he claimed, and the awfulness of the character which he assumed, arrested the attention of the Jews. It was natural for them therefore to enquire, whether he might not be that Messiah, whom they had so long expected. And concluding that, if he were, he must have had power imparted to prove the divinity of his mission, they expected him

him to shew some mighty works which should justify their acknowledgment of his claims, and satisfy them that they were not those of a mere Enthusiast.

Allowing the propriety of their expectations, and perhaps anticipating them, our Saviour supplied every proof of this nature that could be reasonably hoped for^a. And although his works did not at the time convince, as they ought to have done, the prejudiced minds of his countrymen; nevertheless they were such as demonstrate, even at this remote period, that he did come forth from the Father.

If then the Saviour of the World conformed through the whole course of his ministry to so just a principle; if repeatedly importuned he still vouchsafed the evidence required; if, though conscious that *all the fulness of the Godhead dwelt in him*^b, he not only submitted the truth of his assertions to the testimony of his miracles, but even called upon the Jews to reject them, unless approv-

^a John v. 36.—compare John xiv. 11. 12. The signs which the Jews demanded, and which our blessed Lord refused to shew them, were of a nature distinct from the works which are alluded to in our text. See Matt. xii. 38. Compare Mark viii. 11.

^b Coloss. ii. 9.

ed by this infallible test ; *If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not* ; it would ill become us to receive any one who shall assert a divine commission, unless he shall at the same time offer similar evidence in proof of his assertions.

It is therefore only by referring to the criterion of such works, as must be attendant upon a divine mission, that we can consent to judge the case before us. The exacting of which proof is so much the more necessary, as it affects every part of our enquiry. For though we have proved the authors of the Sect to have separated from the Church of England, if they did it really at the suggestion of the holy Spirit, then will they not only be acquitted of the charge of Schism, but we shall have to answer at that dread tribunal, before which they so confidently cite us to appear^c, for the eternal misery

^c Mr. Wesley, having been forbidden to attend some criminals in Newgate, says, “ I cite Mr.— to answer for these souls at the judgment-seat of Christ.” *Fourth Journ.* p. 27.

So Mr. Whitefield ; “ Those who forbid me to speak, I here cite them to answer it to our common Master. (*Third Journ.* p. 74.) See *Fourth Journ.* p. 27. 29. “ At his dreadful tribunal “ I will meet you—there Jesus Christ shall determine who are “ the false Prophets, the wolves in sheep’s cloathing.” See *Bp. Lawington’s Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists compared*, vol. i. p. 123.

of those whom they described as drawing back to perdition, when they quit the pale of this new communion ^d.

But to shew that we are justified in expecting the proof which we require, it will be incumbent on us to establish, in the first place, that the authors of this Sect did actually lay claim to a Divine commission. We shall begin therefore by stating what was the conduct which they adopted, and what were the arguments which they used to justify it.

At an early period of their lives, but not till after that they had seriously reflected on the quality of the engagement, into which they entered, the persons in question were ordained Ministers of the Established Church. What were their opinions at that moment

^d “ First one fell off, then another, and another, till no two of us were left together in the work, beside my brother and me—this gave our common enemies huge occasion to blaspheme—it caused many to *draw back to perdition*; it grieved the holy Spirit of God.” *Coke’s Life of Wesley*, p. 317. “ Why have not thousands more been reformed? Because you (the Ministers of the Church of England) and your associates laboured so heartily in the cause of hell: because you and they spared no pains, either to prevent or to destroy the work of God!—Many who began to taste the good word, you prevailed on to hear it no more; so they *draw back to perdition*. But know, that, for every one of these, God will require an account of you, at the day of judgment.” *Mr. Wesley’s Third Appeal*, p. 128.

respecting

respecting the nature of their call to the Ministry cannot now be accurately ascertained. The little we do know on this subject leads us to conclude, that even then they believed themselves to have been called, not to the common functions of the Priesthood, but to the accomplishment of some extraordinary purpose of the Divine Will^e. This at least is certain, that in a very short time one, and that ultimately the other, arrogated to him-

^e “ I can recollect very early movings of the blessed Spirit upon my heart ; sufficient to satisfy me that God separated me even from my mother’s womb, for the work to which he afterwards was pleased to call me.” *Account of God’s dealings with the Rev. Mr. G. Whitefield*, p. 6. “ God, whose gifts and callings are without repentance, would let nothing pluck one out of his hand.—He passed by me ; he said unto me, *Live* ; and even then gave me some foresight of his providing for me.” *Ibid.* p. 10.

“ One morning as I was reading a play to my sister, said I, Sister, God intends something for me, which we know not of.—How I came to say these words I know not. God afterwards shewed me that they came from him.” *Ibid.* p. 11.

Mr. Wesley indeed, when it was asserted by Mr. Badcock, that he had “ early a very strong impression of his designation to some extraordinary work,” declared, “ that he was guiltless in this matter.” See the Letters which passed on the occasion, *Gent. Magazine*, vol. liv. p. 279 ; and lv. p. 246, 363, and 932. An attentive consideration of this correspondence will probably incline most people to think, that Mr. W. by no means cleared himself from the charge alledged above. See also *Hampson’s Life of Wesley*, vol. iii. p. 25—*Whitehead’s Ditto*, vol. i. p. 376. and *Coke’s*, p. 40, 41.

self a power far superior to that which the ordination they received, and indeed any human ordination, could pretend to convey. It was declared, that they were sent with the Holy Ghost and with Power to execute a peculiar commission; a commission that was not to be limited to any particular Congregation, or Church, or Country, but which was to be extended to every part of the earth^f. Asserting this, they broke through every restraint which the laws of the Established Church had imposed. It was suggested to them indeed, that they had bound themselves by the most solemn of all acts to venerate and to obey these laws: but, in terms of contemptuous superiority, they seemed to intimate, that they were at liberty to disre-

^f Mr. Wesley in his Third Journal says, "Suffer me to tell you my principles in this matter; I look upon all the world as my parish—" P. 70. Mr. Whitefield's declarations are equally explicit. "When he (Mr. Whitefield) heard Christ speak to him in the Gospel, he cried, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And it seems as if at that time it had been made known to him that he was a chosen vessel to bear the name of Christ Jesus through the British Nation and her Colonies—his heart could not admit of his having a stated fixed residence in one place, as the pastor of a particular congregation, and therefore he chose to itinerate from one country to another." *Gillies' Life of Whitefield*, p. 294, 95. Mr. W. himself says, "Evangelizing is certainly my province; I am more and more convinced that I should go from place to place." *Ibid.* p. 132.

gard them^g; and then, in language which nothing but divine Revelation could have authorised, they condemned the Established Ministry as corrupt in conduct and unsound in doctrine^h. In the mean time, giving such an interpretation to Scripture as was frequently dubious, and sometimes contradictory, they nevertheless insisted, that this very interpretation was taught them of God, and that they preached the pure, and the only true Gospel. Adhering to these opinions,

^g See Mr. Whitefield's Letter to the Bp. of B.—Works, vol. iii. p. 159. and *Life by Gillies*, p. 251. and Mr. Wesley's Second and Third Appeals, passim.

^h The virulence with which they attacked the Established Ministry is too well known to require any particular proof; for in fact the regular clergy are hardly ever spoken of but in terms of contempt and reproach: they are generally called dumb-dogs, priests of Baal, wolves in sheep's cloathing, &c. and of Abp. Tillotson Mr. Whitefield said, that he knew no more of religion than Mahomet. So much did some of the Sect wish to defame that prelate, that one of them said, that like Judas he had sold his Lord; and that for doing so, instead of thirty pieces of silver, he had got thirty purses of gold. *Lavington's Entbus.* &c. vol. i. p. 17. and *Seward's Journal*, p. 62. Their object in defaming Tillotson is obvious; but we cannot so easily account for the unbecoming sentiments which Mr. Wesley entertained of some of those, whose names are recorded for our veneration in the Scriptures. For instance, we are assured by Mr. Whitefield, that “he knew that Mr. Wesley “thought meanly of Abraham, and, he believes, of David “also.” *Whitefield's Works*, vol. iv. p. 67.

and

and teaching them in a manner forbidden by that Church, of which they professed themselves to be Ministers, they denounced the vengeance of eternal condemnation against all who should oppose their mission; they said that the blessed Jesus was personally employed in interceding to the Father for the success of their endeavoursⁱ; and they affirmed, that in rejecting their ministry we were blaspheming God's last offers of mercy to mankind^k.

Such were their declarations, attested by their public discourses, by their printed writings, and by the whole tenor of their conduct. And yet would it be thought credible that some should have since asserted, that the above declarations contain no particular meaning: that, in fact, they imply nothing more than that call which every Minister

ⁱ "But take courage, Jesus Christ prays for us." *Whitefield's Letters*, No. 652. In another place he assured a friend that our blessed Lord was interceding for "his poor Societies;" and in another place, "Jesus is on the Mount praying for me."

^k "As long as heaven and earth remain, can there be any thing of so vast importance as God's last call to a guilty land, just perishing in its iniquity? *Wesley's Third Appeal*, p. 130. Little excuse have you who are still in *doubt* concerning this day of your visitation." p. 132. "Inexcusably infatuated must you be, if you can even *doubt* whether the propagation be of God; only more inexcusable are those unhappy men who oppose, contradict, and blaspheme it." p. 135.

in our Church declares himself to have experienced, previous to his ordination. Against so insidious a mode of defence as this, we may with justice protest. Certainly the Minister of the Church of England does declare, that, before he presumes to take part in its Ministry, "he trusts he is moved by the "Holy Spirit." Yet who is there that is unacquainted with the sense in which our Church wishes these words to be understood? If in presenting ourselves for ordination we can truly say, that we are not actuated by any carnal motive; if we can say, that we prefer to every other consideration the desire of promoting the cause of true Religion; that we wish in our own persons to profess a life of such strict holiness, as becometh those who minister about holy things; that we are content to occupy such situations in the Church as are, we may reasonably believe, assigned us by Christ's good pleasure, without seeking for them by forbidden means; if we can add likewise, that, as far as we know our own hearts, our charity is lively, our faith pure, and our hope in the mercies of God firm and constant; then we securely say, that we trust that these holy motions proceed from the influence of that Spirit, who enables us not only to do, but to will that which is well

pleasing in the sight of God¹. Is there any thing however in these assertions, that justifies the idea of designation to an extraordinary commission? Certainly there is not. For it is evident that at the same time that we profess our belief that we are called according to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ; we profess equally “that we are called according to the order of the Church of England.” And this order limits the jurisdiction of each Minister to his appropriate charge; connecting the Divine call with a sincere obedience to the Civil and the Ecclesiastical Establishment.

It cannot be admitted therefore, that the mission, to which the founders of this Sect laid claim, was similar to that which we of the Established Church profess to have received. Neither was it so understood at the time of their appearance. For those who acknowledged the ministry of these new teachers were so far from thinking that they were endued only with that limited power which is conferred by regular ordination, that they declared them to have been called, as was the great Deliverer of the Jewish nation, to govern an holy and a peculiar peo-

¹ Hebrews xiii. 21.

ple ; that they were raised up by the immediate will of the Almighty to execute the designs of his Providence ; that they were the Apostles and the Angels of God^m.

But perhaps it may here be said, that we should argue unfairly, were we to impute to the Authors of this Sect, the opinions which their followers entertained; for the veneration, which is paid to exalted characters, often leads men, in speaking of them, to use unguarded expressions. Perhaps too it may be urged, that the Apostles had become, in the dark ages, objects of religious adoration; and yet, that it was never thence inferred, that they supposed themselves to have been worthy of such distinction. True: but then the Apostles were anxious to prevent men from thinking more highly of them than they ought to think: they trembled

^m Mr. Wesley was considered as a “Phænomenon in the religious world. Wherever he went he was received as an “Apostle—” *Hampson's Life of Wesley*, vol. iii. p. 35. In the “honour due to Moses he also had a share: being placed at the “head of a great people by him who called them, he submitted to take upon him his true character, and he acted agreeably thereunto—he was endued with power from on high—he was chosen out of the world.” *Coke's Life of Wesley*, p. 520. et seq. Of Mr. Whitefield it was said, that “He was “a man of God: that hell trembled before him: and that he “was an angel flying through the midst of heaven with “the everlasting Gospel, to preach it unto them that dwell on “the earth.” *Gillies' Life of Whitefield*, p. 63. 295. and 300.

lest at any time greater distinction should be paid them, than their commission authorized them to receive; and when such distinctions were offered, they were themselves the first to reject and to condemn them. How opposite was the conduct of the Founders of this new Sect! They knew that they were esteemed to be the Apostles and Angels of God; they heard themselves called by those titles, both in public and in private; and yet they never reprov'd their followers for so addressing them. Surely this amounts to a proof almost as strong as a positive declaration, that they believed those titles to have been properly applied.

However, that there may be no ground for misapprehension, let their own words explain what their opinions were.

One of them delivers himself in the following terms. “Inwardly moved by the Spirit, “and not by any hopes of human grandeur “or preferment, *we took upon ourselves the administration of the Church* ⁿ.” And again: “God forbid that we should ascribe *any of that work* to ourselves; no, it was raised “by the Holy Spirit of God ^o.”

ⁿ Whitefield's second Letter to the Bp. of London, Works, vol. iv. p. 167.

^o See *Vindication of the Remarkable Work of God in New England*, Works, vol. iv. p. 79.

To shew that these assertions cannot admit that equivocal interpretation which some would willingly assign to them; to shew also that they were not unguarded expressions which escaped from him during the inexperience of youth; we need only observe, that, when preparing to enter into eternity, he solemnly reiterates the declaration. “ So far
 “ am I from repenting that I have delivered
 “ Gospel truths in the itinerant way, that
 “ had I strength equal to my inclination, I
 “ would preach them from pole to pole, be-
 “ cause I am as much assured that the great
 “ Head of the Church hath called me by his
 “ word, providence, and Spirit to act in this
 “ way, as that the Sun shines at noon-day^p.”
 Can any thing be more explicit? But yet further. So strong was his conviction of the reality of his mission, that he had even begun a work to prove “ the Divinity” of his Sect^q. On which word we may be permitted to observe, that while we apply it to Christianity, to denote the claims of a Religion which has

^p See Mr. Whitefield’s Will, preserved in *Gillies’ Life of Whitefield*, p. 354.

^q *Gillies’ Life of Whitefield*, p. 341. Mr. Wesley also allows the same expression. “ Another fundamental error of those that do not acknowledge *the divinity* of this work, &c.” See Wesley’s Works, vol. xvii. p. 251.

God for its author, and God for its teacher, we know not how, consistently with any principle of piety, the Divinity of a Sect, which had already injured, and was hourly tending to destroy the peaceful unity of an Apostolical Communion, could have been ever asserted^r. Be this however as it may; in that sense, in which the term is predicated of Christianity, in the same sense it must be understood to be predicated of this new communion. Now, as in the former instance it is used to denote a Religion coming from God, and propagated by persons immediately

^r Mr. Whitefield in his private correspondence employs such language as would justify us in supposing that he did not aim at reforming, so much as at subverting the Church of England. "I am glad the Lord hath opened fresh doors for you, my dear Brother (i. e. hath enabled you to establish new congregations, or gain converts): the rams horns are sounding about Jericho: surely the towering walls will at length fall down." *Let.* 515. "Go on, thou man of God: and may the Lord cause thy bow to abide in strength! Glad should I be to come and shoot some Gospel arrows in Devonshire: but the cloud seems now to point toward America—" (alluding, I suppose, to the cloud which miraculously directed the march of the Israelites, Num. ix. 17.) "Whilst I am writing the fire kindles—our large society goes on well—I hear of glorious things from various parts—I hope ere long we shall hear of persons going from post to post, and crying, Babylon is fallen! Babylon is fallen! Pray write me word how the war is going on between Michael and the dragon." *Let.* 498.

of his appointment; in the latter, it must describe a Sect, which, whether its doctrines be regarded, or the means employed for its establishment, must equally be considered to have proceeded from God.

The asseverations which were made by the other Founder of the Sect need not be detailed at length. It will be sufficient to remark, that they are sometimes even more unequivocal than those which have been cited above. His constant appellation of the work was, that it was “the work of God.” And of himself he declared, in terms that bear an unbecoming affinity to those which the Son of God only could with propriety have used; “To establish this Sect was the work for which I came into the world^s.”

Seeing then that such were the opinions of their followers, and such their own assertions; in charity, as well as in reason, we must conclude that these Sectaries believed themselves to have received a divine com-

^s “It is a very small thing for me to be judged by man’s judgement; yet as the being thought guilty of so mischievous an imprudence might make me less *able to do the work* I came into the world for, I am obliged to clear myself of it.” *Preface to First Journal*, p. iv. It was thus that, in words almost similar, the blessed Jesus said, “For this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.” John xviii. 37. See also xvii. 4.

mission. Yes, we must repeat, in charity. For though some of their assertions are worded in an ambiguous manner, yet as many of them unequivocally claim a mission of the highest nature, it is from these latter that we may fairly estimate their pretensions. Could we suppose that they demanded acceptance from one sort of men, as Ministers of the Established Church; and from another as Apostles, and divinely commissioned messengers; we then should be obliged to view them as acting with a duplicity that would render their pretensions hardly deserving a serious confutation.

Seeing therefore that they believed themselves, like the Prophets and Apostles of old, to have received a peculiar communication of divine authority; we now proceed to enquire what evidence they adduced to prove that such a belief was well founded.

To this mode of investigation they will undoubtedly be the very last to object. For not only is it reasonable in itself, and such as the very nature of the case demands; but it is one which they themselves have provoked, by declaring, that if ever any dispensation possessed "all the marks of a divine signature^t," it was that of which they were the

^t Whitefield's Works, vol. iv. p. 91.

Apostles. Since then their declaration is thus positive, and since they have repeatedly affirmed, that “ the Almighty has set to his seal, “ that the work is true ;” unless this seal and these signatures be found, we must conclude that a belief in their existence could only have arisen from the strong delusions of an enthusiastic imagination.

And here, to shorten the enquiry, let it be granted, what in fact can never be reasonably denied, that every divine revelation is attended with such external and internal evidence, as may at all times demonstrate that the communications, in favour of which they have been adduced, could not have proceeded but from God only.

Of external evidence the criterions will be; the completion of prophecy, and the working of miracles. Those of internal evidence; the perfect agreement of the doctrines delivered with all previous revelations, and with themselves. It is but necessary to add, that both the external and the internal evidence must be found united in support of the cause; for, when separate, they might justly be considered as forming a defective proof^u.

^u It is so much the more necessary, in the present instance, to insist upon the consistency of all divine revelations, because

It is in reference to these principles, that we will conduct our present enquiry. And first we will ascertain how far the Sect, which lays so imperiously its claim to divinity, has those signatures of external evidence, which, if its claim be well founded, it cannot but possess.

That we may be clearly understood in this point, it will not be unnecessary perhaps to make a few previous observations.

In every intercourse which the Almighty has been pleased to hold with his creatures, he has graciously followed the same method which they pursue in their solemn intercourses with one another. For as with men no one presumes to act under delegated authority, until he has first required and obtained some pledge whereby he may know that authority to act has really been conferred upon him; so the Supreme Being, though he might in every case compel our obedience, neverthe-

because one of the methods, by which Mr. Wesley would defend his Sect, is by asserting, that, though great inconsistencies be discovered in any work pretending to come from God, these form no argument to prove that the work is not truly his. A mode of reasoning this, which would take from us the possibility of distinguishing not only truth from error, but of detecting even wilful imposture. See Wesley's Works, vol. xvii. p. 188. The same idea is also pursued in another tract in the same vol. p. 247.

less permits that we should fully satisfy ourselves as to the reality of our mission, before we undertake the work which he has assigned us to perform.

That the Almighty is pleased to act in this manner is owing, if we may be permitted to use the expressions, not so much to his condescension to the weakness of our natures; or to his desire of overcoming any irrational fears, which we might chance to entertain; as to his intention of acting in conformity to that eternal law of wisdom, by which in all its operations divine perfection is directed. For as every dispensation must of necessity be administered by the hands of an intermediate agent; unless that agent be fully satisfied of the truth of his commission; unless he feel within himself the strongest possible conviction that he is not deluded, how can he act with that confidence, which will be necessary to ensure the success of the work which is entrusted to his care?

Thus Gideon required and obtained two miracles, to ascertain whether the Lord would indeed deliver Israel by his hand, as he had said *. Thus, in like manner, two miracles were offered to Moses before he was expected

* Judges vi. 36.

to enter on the still more arduous office of rescuing the Jewish nation from the power of the Egyptians; even though the way, in which he had been permitted to converse with Jehovah, must have precluded every doubt concerning the reality of his mission^y. In neither case however were these servants of God reproved for incredulity. On such important occasions a certain degree of diffidence may be well pleasing in the sight of the Almighty. So that perhaps we might even venture to believe, that he will at all times approve our conduct, when, impressed with an humble sense of our own unworthiness, and fearful of mistaking the suggestions of a proud human imagination for divine commandments, we seek for strong evidence to convince us that he hath really committed to our care the accomplishment of his extraordinary dispensations.

But yet further. As the Almighty requires not that his especial Ministers should act until they know that authority has been imparted; so neither does he expect that the persons to whom they are sent should receive them, until such time as the proof of that authority shall have been displayed. Thus

^y Exodus iv. 1. et seq.

when the promise of a Saviour was revealed to Ahaz, before he was required to believe, he was permitted to *ask a sign, either in the depth below, or in the height above*^z. Thus also, when Christ sent his Apostles to preach the Gospel, he anticipated every request, and removed every apprehension, by assuring them, that they should have power to perform miracles^a. And if this power was imparted, it was not in order to add personal importance to the character of the Apostles; but that, by enabling them to exhibit such external evidence in support of the truth of their cause, as no human art could imitate, the nature of their mission might be evident to all men^b. Had it not been for this, how could the Gentiles have been expected to receive doctrines which were so opposite to all their former notions? How could they have been

^z Isaiah vii. 11.

^a Matt. x. 1. and Mark xvi. 17

^b “ But how were such persons, whom we suppose Teachers “ from heaven, to prevail with others to receive what they “ taught as the will of God? Will their bare assertion be sufficient? At this rate a wide door would be opened to imposture, and every one might, at pleasure, publish the whims of a “ disordered imagination, or the errors of a depraved heart, as “ messages from heaven. It must, therefore, be in the power of “ the divine Teacher to appeal to some credential, that may “ prove he hath a right to be believed.” *Bp. of Salisbury’s Criterion, or Miracles examined*, p. 42.

persuaded to renounce a national belief, and to abandon the religion of their forefathers; exposing themselves to the anger of those dæmons, whom before they worshipped; unless such works had been previously wrought, as might prove that the persons who addressed them had been both instructed and commissioned by the Almighty to teach them the words of *everlasting life*?

Arguing then from these positions, as the Founders of this new Sect asserted themselves to have been sent from the Almighty, our first question must be, whether they were certain that they acted under his authority. That they believed they did, we will readily allow: this will however by no means remove the suspicion of Enthusiasm. Did they ask for, did they receive, any unquestionable proof that this their belief was well founded? Some sufficient testimony the Almighty never yet refused to any of his messengers: and could they have supposed that, being unchangeable in mercy and in wisdom, he would have refused such a testimony unto them? When therefore one of them asserts in these very awful words, “The Eternal, the Almighty, the Self-existing God hath sent me^b,”

^b “The Eternal Almighty I AM hath sent me.” See the Bp. of London on Enthusiasm, p. 17. We need hardly remark,
that

if his belief of this was founded on no other proof than on the confused dreams of childhood, and on the casual coincidence of a few trifling circumstances, is not this Enthusiasm^c? Or again; if the other persuaded himself that his preaching was preparatory to the final coming of Christ to purify his Church, and to reign gloriously upon the earth^d; and had nothing whereon to

that the above words of Mr. Whitefield's are the same with those by which the divine commission was given to Moses: Thus shalt thou say, "I AM hath sent me." Exodus iii. 14.

^c "Near this time I dreamed that I was to see God on mount Sinai, but was afraid to meet him. This made a great impression upon me: and a gentlewoman, to whom I told it, said, George, this is a call from God." *Short Account of God's early Dealings with Mr. Whitefield*, p. 13.

"As I was going on an errand, an unaccountable impression was made on my heart, that I should preach and print quickly. When I came home, I *innocently* told this to my mother:" but *like Joseph* he was not regarded. "God however has since shewn her from what that impression came." *Ibid.* p. 14. He recounts another dream, p. 34. and again 37. Even some inference seems to be drawn from the circumstance of his having been born at an inn, because "my dear Saviour was born in a manger belonging to an inn." P. 5.

^d "Mr. Wesley considered Methodism as a grand revival of religion, and plainly assures the world, that he regarded it as the principal event preparatory to the glory of the latter days, and the conversion of all nations to the faith of Christ." And so persuaded was he of this, that he declares he is astonished that Bengelius could have assigned the year 1836 for that event, since he must have heard of his preaching. *Hamp-*
sen's

ground this persuasion, but merely the conviction he felt that it was true, is not this also Enthusiasm? For the Apostle and the Enthusiast differ not in the strength of their convictions. These in both may be equally strong. They differ in this; that the Apostle rests his conviction on such proof as renders it impossible that he should have been deceived; while the Enthusiast rests his on such testimony as reason must reject as insufficient; and which he himself, in any other case but his own, would acknowledge to be mere delusion.

It should seem then, that the Authors of this new Communion had received no proof which justified them in their belief of those claims which they advanced. Let us now enquire whether the testimony of their works be such as will authorise us, as reasonable beings, as beings who are responsible for our actions to God, to acknowledge the divinity of their mission.

To expect that the testimony of works should be afforded was so natural, that no sooner were the pretensions of these new Teachers made known, than the demand was made by every dispassionate member of the Established Church. To whom it was an-

son's Life of Wesley, vol. ii. p. 4. Mr. Whitefield seems to have almost had the same opinion. *Gillies' Life of Whitefield*, p. 144.
fwered,

swered, "Would you have us prove by miracles that our doctrines are true? It is a gross absurdity to expect miracles in this case: we prove them by the Scriptures, by reason, and antiquity^e."

But here we may observe, that the question was either misunderstood, or perverted. The enquiry was not, whether the doctrines were true, but whether the mission was divine. Could this latter point have been established, there would have been no difficulty in adopting the doctrines which were taught.

Compelled however at last to meet the objection, it was replied in the following words: "It may be questioned reasonably, whether there was ever that man living upon earth, who could work miracles when he pleased. If he could, there is no Scripture authority for doing it in order to satisfy such a demand; miracles therefore are quite needless in our case^f."

Still this answer was both inaccurate and sophistical. For, if an appeal were made to reason, it would be found, that as an argument it was fallacious; if a reference were made to Scripture, that as an assertion it was un-

^e Mr. Wesley's Third Appeal, p. 122, 3, 4.

^f Third Appeal, p. 123-4.

founded. Two points however it established, and these the only points on which we need insist; the one, that the necessity of miracles to attest the divinity of this Sect was absolutely disclaimed: the other, that its Apostles unequivocally confessed, that they had no power to perform them. We now are to require that they act consistently with these declarations.

What shall we say then, when we hear it asserted, that if we reject this religion ^g, (for such was the name they gave their Sect,) the ground of our condemnation will be this, that the Almighty had interfered miraculously to prove that the work was his? Or, how can we reconcile it to any principle of reason, that these new Teachers should so constantly have declared, that they extorted not from men only, but from the very powers of darkness, a reluctant confession, that they were truly the messengers of God ^h? Nor were these the

^g Mr. Wesley went so far as even to say, “that Methodism “was the only Religion worthy of God.” *Hampson’s Life*, vol. iii. p. 30.

^h As Mr. Wesley’s Journal may not be in every body’s hands, we shall be pardoned perhaps if we give one or two of these miraculous attestations to the truth of his mission, somewhat at length. “I was sent for to one of those who had been “so ill before. A violent rain began when I set out: just “at that time the woman (then three miles off) cried out, “Yonder comes Wesley. When I came, she burst into an
“horrid

only divine attestations granted in their favour. Did they doubt where they should go

“horrid laughter, and said, No power, no faith, her soul is mine. *One*—(in this manner Mr. W. frequently designates himself)—*One*, who was clearly convinced that this was no natural disorder, said, I think Satan is let loose; I fear he will not stop here; and added, I command thee in the name of the Lord Jesus, to tell if thou hast commission to torment any other soul. It was immediately answered, I have.” The names of two women are then mentioned; who are described as falling soon after into a strange agony, with convulsions, cries, and groans, too horrid to be borne: from which they are both delivered by Mr. W.’s prayers. “To one of them God in a moment spoke: she knew his voice, and was healed both in body and soul.” *Third Journal*, p. 115, 116.

A person “who had been zealous for the Church,” and had declared that Mr. W.’s pretensions were delusion, is of a sudden supernaturally seized with agonies of body and of mind. Mr. W. says, “I came in, and he cried out, Let all the world see the just judgment of God. He immediately fixed his eyes upon me, and stretching out his hand, cried, Aye, this is he who I said was a deceiver of the people: but God has overtaken me. He then roared out, O thou legion of devils, thou canst not stay; Christ will cast thee out: I know his work is begun. Mr. W. then, with those who were with him, betook himself to prayer: the pangs ceased; and the man was set at liberty, both in body and soul.” *Third Journ.* p. 56. In another instance, it is revealed in a dream to a lady, who is horribly possessed by the devil, and who was made worse by the attendance of the regular Minister, that Mr. W. should be sent to heal her. She sees Mr. W. acknowledges him to be the person who had been revealed to her in the dream, and is healed. All the circumstances of this transaction are to be found, *Bp. Lavington’s Entbus.* &c. vol. ii. p. 75. He adduces in the same section many other relations of a similar nature;

to preach their doctrines, they were directed by supernatural intimationsⁱ: did they travel among strangers, a reception was miraculously provided for them^k: did they preach the word, the elements were commanded

and points out some circumstances, which might almost lead to a suspicion of deliberate imposture.

ⁱ “Which looking like the call given Paul, when the man appeared to him, saying, Come over to Macedonia, and help us; I this morning, in the name and strength of God, set out for New York.” *Whitefield’s Fifth Journal*, p. 33. “This day I intended to stay on board; but God being pleased to shew me it was not his will, I went on shore.” *Ditto, First Journal*, p. 31. “I have essayed to come to you more than once or twice; but, I believe I may say, ‘the Spirit suffered me not.’” *Lett.* 518. It was indeed the practice of both Mr. Wesley and Mr. Whitefield to consult the Almighty by lot, whenever they doubted where to go. See *Wesley’s Third Journal*, p. 38. and *Whitefield’s Letter to Wesley*, Works, vol. iv. p. 55.

^k “I am going to the house of a wealthy gentleman,” says Mr. Whitefield, “whom God has commanded to receive me.” *Bp. Lavington*, vol. i. p. 67. “Long before I reached Gibraltar, I prayed that God would direct me where I should lodge; and lo, he has answered me. A person I never saw has sent to tell me, he has provided a convenient lodging for me.” *First Journal*, p. 32. So again in the *Fifth Journal*, p. 25. “I pray to God before I go, and I find, in answer to my prayer, that he always commands some or other of his household to take care of and provide for me.” Mr. W. seems to have supposed that the Almighty carried his providence so far as even to provide money for him. “Tell dear Mr. —, that our Saviour will enable me to pay him the 25l. he lent me, with a thousand thanks.” *Lett.* 519. See particularly *Lett.* 293.

to be still^l: did they faint under their labours, they were instantaneously supported^m:

^l “ At three in the afternoon I preached at Heptonstall, on “ the brow of the mountain. The rain began almost as I began to speak. I prayed that, if God thought best, it may be “ stayed, till I had delivered his word. It was so; and then “ began again. On the 26th, when I began to preach in a “ meadow, the wind was so high that I could hardly speak. “ But the winds too, are in God’s hand. In a few minutes “ that inconvenience ceased. On the 27th I left the church “ to preach in the open air; and though it had rained inter- “ mittingly before, from the moment I came out of the “ church the rain ceased. How many proofs must we have, “ that there is no petition too little, any more than too great, “ for God to grant?” *Wesley’s Tenth Journal*, p. 9, and 10. Mr. Whitefield, in like manner, says, “ When I was preaching “ it rained; but God was pleased so visibly to interpose, in caus- “ ing the weather to clear up, and the sun to shine out, just as “ I began, that I could not avoid taking notice of it in my dis- “ course.” *Third Journal*, p. 94. So but two days before, when it rained so hard, as to make him almost determine not to preach, prayer was made that “ God would withhold the rain: “ which he did immediately.” P. 93.

^m Mr. Wesley relates, that he was once so ill, as hardly to be able to speak; “ But,” said he, “ these words, ‘ These signs shall “ follow those who believe,’ came strongly into my mind. I “ called on Jesus aloud, to increase my faith, and confirm the “ word of his grace. While I was speaking, my pain vanish- “ ed; the fever left me; and my bodily strength returned.” *Wesley’s Fourth Journal*, p. 72. So Mr. Whitefield declares, “ that God supported him without sleep,” (*Third Journal*, p. 5.) and that he cured him of an hoarseness in the pulpit, so as to enable him “ to lift up his voice like a trumpet.” See *Bp. Lavington*, vol. i. part ii. p. 45. “ And at another time,” says Mr. Whitefield, “ perceiving an uncommon drought, and a disa-

were they ever in danger, some miracle was wrought to preserve themⁿ: or were they opposed in their ministry, those who withstood them were suddenly called hence by the Almighty himself, to answer for their guilt before his dread tribunal^o. To assert such repeated instances of miraculous interposition, when all pretensions to miraculous interposi-

“ agreeable clamminess in my mouth, and using things to allay
 “ my thirst, but in vain; it was suggested to me, that when
 “ Jesus Christ cried out, ‘ I thirst,’ his sufferings were at an end.
 “ Upon which I cast myself down upon the bed, crying out, ‘ I
 “ thirst,’ and acted faith upon a Crucified Jesus, bleeding for
 “ me in particular; soon after I was delivered from the bur-
 “ then that so heavily oppressed me.” It was in this moment
 that he was regenerated. *Account of God’s Dealings, &c.* p. 29.

ⁿ See Mr. Whitefield’s Second Journal, p. 13. et seq. and Mr. Wesley’s, No. v. from p. 118. to the end. But it will be needless to cite particular passages: every page almost of their Journals abounds with the accounts of their miraculous preservation amidst imminent dangers. I cannot forbear noticing however the following instance. Mr. Whitefield in his First Journal, p. 23. having described a wonderful deliverance which God had wrought for him when at sea, adds, “ God so ordered it, that
 “ I knew nothing of it till it was over.” As if the Almighty was careful not only to preserve his life, but even to save him from needless anxiety and apprehension.

^o Mr. S. was prosecuted for having repelled a person from the Communion. “ What was the event?” says Mr. Wesley. “ He who alone was willing and able to espouse the cause
 “ took it into his hand; and before the day, when it should
 “ have been tried here, called the Plaintiff to answer at an
 “ higher bar.” *Second Appeal*, p. 49.

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tion had been disclaimed, is an inconsistency, which compels us to come to some conclusion. That the facts happened as recorded, we will readily allow : but that they were miraculous, we deny ; and this upon their own confession. For if miracles were needless in their case, the Almighty cannot be supposed to have wrought any. The occurrences above cited must therefore have been common and ordinary events ; and the mind, before it could have seriously believed them to have been supernatural, must have been deluded by the Spirit of Enthusiasm.

To prove that this conclusion is well founded, let it be observed, that, were all those facts miraculous, which the Authors of the Sect would wish us to believe were miraculous, their mission will have been attested by nearly as many manifestations of God's co-operation, as was that of the Apostles. It is remarkable however, that many of these attestations are of a nature so puerile, and given sometimes on occasions so trifling, that the very reverence, which is due to a religious assembly, does not permit us now so much as even to recite them^p. Which circumstance is

^p “ What I here aver is the naked fact ; let every man *account for it* as he sees good. My horse being exceeding lame,
“ and myself tired, I thought ‘ Cannot God heal either man or
a 4 “ beast,

sufficient of itself to prove that those events could not have been produced, as they believed, by divine agency. For if it may be said on the one hand, that the works performed by the Apostles are in themselves so dignified, and in their application so just, that they bear intrinsic marks of having really been wrought by the power of God ; on the other hand it must be argued, that the works which were adduced in favour of these new Teachers could not have proceeded from the same divine Author. How then, let it asked, how could this distinctive difference have been unnoticed ? How could the mind have been insensible to such a striking contrast, unless it were that the judgment had been previously perverted by means of the imagination ?

Had it not been owing to this cause, the Authors of the Sect could never have forgotten that both reason and religion teach us that there are certain particulars, which, as characteristic marks, must be found to unite in favour of every work pretending to be superna-

"beast, by any means, *or without any.*" Immediately my weariness and my horse's lameness ceased in the same instant." *Sixth Journal*, p. 125. In like manner Mr. Seward : " My horse fell, and I fell off : but, blessed be God, (who sent his angel to preserve me) I had not the least hurt ; not so much " as of my foot against a stone." *Journal*, p. 86.

tural,

tural, before we are justified in believing it to be such. It is necessary, for instance, that the authenticity of a miracle should not rest upon the bare testimony of the person on whom it is said to have been wrought, and still less upon the word of him who professes to have wrought it. It is necessary that the witnesses adduced in its support should be such as could have had no interest in countenancing imposture, and such too as had the means of detecting delusion. And, above all, it is necessary that the event should have been unequivocally and publicly both affirmed, and admitted to have been miraculous at the very time when it occurred⁹. Did we not insist

9 “ Now I think it will be impossible for you to assign any particular instance of a Pagan or Popish miracle, the accounts of which do not labour under one or other of the following defects, which we think warrant our disbelieving them.

“ I. We suspect the accounts to be false, when they are not published to the world till long after the time when they are said to be performed.

“ II. When they are not published in the place where it is pretended that the facts are wrought, but are propagated only at a great distance from the supposed scene of action.

“ III. Supposing the accounts to have the two foregoing qualifications, we still may suspect them to be false, if in the time when, and at the place where, they took their rise, they might be suffered to pass without examination.” *Bp. of Salisbury's Criterion, or Miracles examined, &c.* p. 51.

on this combination of evidence, the credulity of some, and the art of others, might impose upon us as miracles, events which in reality were nothing more than the result of natural causes. So powerful is our imagination, and so imperfect are our senses, that, were we not cautious what we admitted in this particular, there is no circumstance, however trivial, which might not sometimes delude us. The murmuring of the wind, the glimmering of reflected light, or the passing shadow of a cloud, would be sufficient to lead us into error : and thus the measure of our faith would depend upon the weakness of our judgment, or the strength of our imagination^r.

Of the miracles recorded in Scripture, there is not one which can be attributed to the power of fancy, to the fortunate concurrence of circumstances, or to the operation of natural causes. If any be found, which might be referred, even in part, to these causes, they are attended with such collateral evidence, as removes from the unprejudiced mind all doubt of their authenticity. Thus when the son of the nobleman was healed, it might have been urged, that the

^r See Transactions of Manchester Society, vol. iii. p. 463.

sudden intermission of disorders rendered it not impossible but that he might have accidentally recovered during the absence of his father. Of this the latter appears to have been conscious, for he is not described as believing, until he had ascertained that his child was restored at the self-same hour, in which Jesus had said, "*Thy son liveth* ^s."

Forming our judgment then on these principles, we may venture to affirm, that, if we are willing, we can never be at a loss to ascertain the real character of every work which claims to be supernatural. The illustration of a particular instance will best explain and confirm what has been advanced.

As far as we can draw any conclusion from a passage of his writings, which is worded with much ambiguity, we are to believe that the Author of the Sect considers himself, in the course of his ministry, to have miraculously restored a person to life. But the event is attested by none of those circumstances, which are necessary to prove that it was miraculous. For instance, it happened in a private chamber: no one is specified who witnessed it; no proof is given that it was known or conceived by others to have

^s John iv. 51, 52.

been a supernatural occurrence; it is recorded only by the person who was the agent; and even he asserts no more than, that the person *seemed to be dead*. Let all these circumstances be considered, and it will be found that nothing, short of Enthusiasm, could have led any one to believe that the event was miraculous^t.

^t See Journal v. p. 83. I am sensible that the narration is so worded, as that it may be said, that no miracle is here laid claim to. But Mr. Wesley's concluding words must be allowed to prove, in what light he considered the event. "I wait to hear, who will either disprove this fact, or philosophically account for it." P. 84. Had he not believed the man to have been dead, he must have known that his recovery was to be accounted for on natural principles. That some of his Sect had the power of working miracles he believed; he might therefore well believe, that the same power might have been communicated to himself. See *Hampson's Life*, vol. ii. p. 130. and the account of the manner in which an Enthusiast, who was encouraged by Mr. W. attempted to restore a blind man to sight, by anointing his eyes with clay, or spittle, and pronouncing authoritatively Ephphatha. P. 132. Yet Mr. W. believed, that this person had in another instance cured a woman of an inveterate complaint, and in his *usual mode of decision* observes, "She was ill; she is well; she was so in a moment." P. 131. And here it should be observed, that, when speaking of the cures wrought by himself, he never positively asserts that they were miraculous; he only throws out an intimation that they could not have been natural occurrences. See *Bp. Lavington, &c.* vol. ii. p. 131. et seq.—p. 211. and 214. where Mr. W. asserts positively the power of working miracles. The following letter addressed to Mr. W. and inserted by himself into his Third Journal, p. 35. will probably be thought a sufficient proof to decide the question, should any doubt be entertained.— "Sir, Your
" prayers

But when the blessed Jesus — (O, let it not be thought irreverent, that we have adduced the sacred operations of his Almighty power, to expose the weak pretensions of Enthusiasm) — when he, I say, whose name is above every name, in attestation of the truth of his mission is described as having raised the dead, not all the arts of infidelity, not all the powers of scepticism, are able to discover a single circumstance that can disprove the fact.

Who is there that must not be sensible, that there is even a studied caution to preclude the possibility of delusion in the case of Lazarus? He had been dead four days already, and his body was turned to corruption, before our divine Lord thought proper to approach his grave. Not from unkindness, or from any disregard to the sorrow of his brethren, was this delay occasioned; but solely to the intent, that such changes might take place as would convince the most incredulous that the work to be performed did neither result from natural causes, nor depend upon the force of imagination. When therefore Lazarus came forth, we believe the event to

“ prayers are desired for a child that is lunatic, that our Lord
 “ would be pleased to heal him, *as he did those* in the days
 “ of his flesh——.”

have

have been really a miracle, because all the necessary evidence unites to prove, not only that the fact took place as it is described, but that it could not have been referred to natural causes^u.

Once more, let me hope that it will not be thought unbecoming thus to have brought, as it were within the verge of comparison, two narrations, in every essential point so widely different. In fact, the heavens are not further removed from the earth, than would the terms of the comparison be, were any intended. We trust however, that the contrast between truth and error will have been made so striking, as that every reasonable mind must acknowledge, that those works, which are conceived to be supernatural by Enthusiasts, can never, unless wilfully, be confounded with those which have been produced by divine agency.

It appears then, that the claim to a divine commission, which was advanced by the Authors of the Sect before us, is unsupported by one part of external evidence. Of the second part of it, that is of the completion of prophecy, little need be said. They did not even pretend, that their coming was foretold

^u See John, chap. xi. and xii. 10. 11.

by the inspired writers. And yet, it would not have been unreasonable to expect, that an event of such importance, as they conceived their coming to have been, should have been made the subject of prophecy*. For they tell us that their coming was the period in which the great God and Saviour would arise to be avenged of his adversaries; that it was his last call to a guilty world; that it was his final effort to visit and redeem his people. However, as nothing seems to have been asserted, with any precision, on this head, there is nothing to confute. Perhaps it was wise to be silent. If prophecy have taught us to expect any thing in these latter days, it is neither new revelations nor new messengers from the throne of grace; it is rather false prophets, and false teachers we are to expect,

* Yet there are expressions, which might lead us to suppose, that they even thought themselves the immediate object of prophecy. We have seen that Mr. Wesley was surprised that Bengelius should not have considered his preaching to have been the fulfilment of Scripture prophecy. Mr. Whitefield says, "God was pleased to *fulfil in me* the promise given in Jeremiah, "xxiii. 12. 34. Thus saith the Lord—I will gather the remnant of my flock, out of all countries whither I have driven them; and will bring them again to their folds, and they shall be fruitful and increase, and I will set shepherds over them, which shall feed them, and they shall fear no more." *Fifth Journal*, p. 47.

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who are described as having power to entice the credulous with lying wonders ; and to mislead with unsound doctrines such as should be fond of novelty.

And here our enquiry might be closed. For as it has been proved that the divine mission of the Authors of this new Sect is attested by no mark of external evidence ; we cannot but infer, that their belief in such a mission was owing to the force of imagination.

As it would contribute, however, to shew the greatness of their delusion, could we prove that their claims to divine communications are as destitute of internal, as they are of external evidence, we will proceed to examine this part of the question also.

On the first criterion of internal evidence, namely, on the agreement of the doctrines taught with the whole tenor of Revelation, we need not long insist. There are certainly many doctrines, which these new Teachers hold in common with the Church of Christ. There are some however, which are peculiar to themselves : of these the three following are selected, as being fundamental in their religion.

I. They maintained the necessity of feeling the assurance of salvation and forgiveness

ness of sin: which assurance is not to arise from any conviction of the understanding in the application of God's promises; but from a sudden infusion of divine feeling, and an irresistible impulse; which is to be communicated always by a sensible, sometimes even a visible, descent of the Holy Ghost; and sometimes by a manifestation of our blessed Lord in person ^y.

^y "God does now as aforetime give remissions of sin, and
 "the gift of the Holy Ghost to us; and that always suddenly,
 "as far as I have known, and often in dreams, and in the vi-
 "sions of God." Mr. Wesley, as cited by Hampson in his
 Life, vol. ii. p. 81. So again: "I am one of many witnesses of
 "this matter of fact, that God does very frequently, (give the
 "divine call) during a representation (how made I know not,
 "but not to the outward eye) of Christ, either hanging on
 "the Cross, or standing on the right hand of God." Mr. W.
 ut sup. p. 55. But sometimes, even the visible appearance of
 our blessed Lord is asserted. "I *saw* the fountain opened in his
 "side—we have *often seen* Jesus Christ crucified, and evidently
 "set forth before us—" *Bp. Lavington*, vol. i. part i. p. 51.
 So *Coke's Life of Wesley*, p. 329. "Being in the utmost agony of
 "mind, there was clearly represented to him Jesus Christ
 "pleading for him with God the Father, and gaining a free
 "pardon for him." Thus in *Mr. W.'s Letters* published by
 Dr. Priestley, p. 70. "A young man, as he was going to re-
 "ceive the Sacrament, had God the Father come to him, but
 "he did not stay with him; but God the Son did stay,
 "who came holding his cross in his hands—" Mr. White-
 field declares that "a most remarkable out-pouring of the Spirit
 "has been *seen* in their assemblies." *Fifth Journal*, p. 41. So
 his Biographer: "I myself have been witness to the Holy Ghost
 "falling

II. They taught that believers may attain to perfection in this life, so as to be absolutely freed from the dominion of sin^z.

III. They insisted, that regeneration, as understood in our Church, is a superstitious and idolatrous notion. That in fact it is a supernatural process, which at some period of our lives takes place in our hearts: and beginning suddenly, after horrible pangs, and groans,

“falling upon Mr. Whitefield and his hearers, oftener than
“once.” *Gillies’ Life of Whitefield*, p. 94. See also p. 34. and
43.

^z As some persons believe that Mr. Wesley, in asserting the doctrine of perfection, meant to assert only a comparative, not an absolute dominion over sin, we may be pardoned the length of the following quotation. They are Mr. W.’s own words, “They
“ (the sanctified, with whom probation is ended) are freed
“ from self-will: as desiring nothing, no not for a moment,
“ but the holy and perfect will of God: neither supplies
“ in want, nor ease in pain, nor life, nor death, but continually cry in their inmost soul, *Father, thy will be done.*”
“ They are freed from evil thoughts, so that they cannot enter
“ into them, no not for an instant. Aforetime (i. e. when
“ only justified) when an evil thought came in, they looked up,
“ and it vanished away: but now it does not come in; there
“ being no room for this in a soul which is full of God. They
“ are freed from wanderings in prayer: they have an unction
“ from the Holy One, which abideth in them, and teacheth
“ them every hour what they shall do, and what they shall
“ speak.” See *Preface to Second Vol. of Mr. W.’s Hymns*, p. 6, 7.
Tucker’s History of the Principles of Methodism, p. 38. and
Hampson’s Life of Wesley, vol. iii. p. 52. et seq. and *Coke’s Ditto*,
p. 278. and 344.

and

and screams, and frequently delirium, is terminated, sometimes after a few hours agony, in rapturous sensations, ecstasies, and an inconceivable joy of heart ^a.

Such are three of the principal tenets of the Sect; and we need not scruple to assert, that in the sense here given them, they are

^a Mr. Whitefield called our notion of Regeneration, our Diana of Ephesus, (Works, vol. iv. p. 241.) in allusion to Acts xix. where Demetrius and the Craftsmen oppose the Apostles, because, if the veneration for their idol was destroyed, their craft, by which they gained their wealth, would be in danger. The manner, in which “the pangs of the new birth” came on each individual, occasionally varied: generally speaking, those who experienced them fell to the ground like persons struck by lightning, and lay groveling in unspeakable agonies till they suddenly sprung up full of joy, and possessed with the assurance of salvation. See *Journals* passim. Sometimes they were seized with horrid fits of involuntary laughter: “sometimes screaming out “that they were damned, and grinding their teeth, they longed “to tear their preacher to pieces, and thus made their meeting-house resemble the habitation of apostate spirits.” See a tremendous account of one of these assemblies in *Hampson's Life of Wesley*, vol. ii. p. 70. There were occasions on which they asserted that they felt as if a sword was running through them: and they declared, “that the blood of Christ ran down “their arms and throats; or that it was poured like warm “water on their breasts and hearts.” *Ibid.* p. 74. In Coke's *Life of Mr. Wesley*, it is related, that “of 6 or 7000 people “there were few comparatively who had the proper use of their “bodily powers: some were lying as in the pangs of death: “some as cold as clay: yet during this time, they were happy “beyond description.” P. 464.

contradictory to the doctrines taught in the pure and uncorrupted page of Scripture.

That there is an assurance of salvation, which the pious Christian is permitted to entertain, the Scriptures, blessed be the infinite mercies of God, fully testify. But they tell us, that this assurance results from a firm reliance on the *faithfulness of God's promises*; that it is connected with a *constant perseverance in well-doing*; and is to be encouraged *with fear and trembling*. But what page, or word of Holy Writ is there, that teaches us absolute dominion over sin? There is none. We may proceed indeed *from strength to strength*; and by the assistance of God's grace we shall so proceed. At best however that strength is but weakness. And whatever comparative perfection is attained on this side the grave, it is acquired from knowing that we are hourly liable to fall. As for the new birth, we are taught that this is the gradual renovation of the heart, through the influence of the Holy Spirit; a renovation begun on earth, and perfected then only, when *this mortal shall have put on immortality*; when *this corruption shall have put on incorruption*, and the creature shall be permitted to stand in the presence of his Creator.

To distort then these doctrines from their
original

original meaning ; to build on them the most dangerous conceits ; and then to enforce them as the fundamentals of a system, is a conduct which of itself abundantly proves, that these new Teachers can lay no claim to that internal evidence in favour of the divinity of their Sect, which ought to be drawn from a perfect conformity of its doctrines to those of Revelation.

Thus much may be sufficient on this point. We shall therefore proceed to shew that the Sect is altogether destitute of the second mark of internal evidence : namely, that of a perfect consistency between the doctrines taught respectively by its Founders. Which consistency must of necessity appear, if indeed those doctrines were revealed to them from God.

For when we consider the nature of the Supreme Being, we cannot but allow, that knowledge is in Him so perfect, and truth so immutable, that all his revelations, at whatever interval delivered, or by whatever means conveyed, cannot possibly admit of the smallest variation.

It is by an application of this rule, that the Christian Religion, although so often tried, has always approved itself to be of God. The consistency of the Apostles is to the Believer a matter of lasting triumph and consolation.

Separated from each other by distant kingdoms, instructing different nations; writing at various times, perhaps in various languages, and certainly without the possibility of collusion, or even the mutual knowledge of their common intentions; still they uniformly delivered one and the same Gospel; whence it is to a demonstration proved, that the Spirit, which gave the same utterance to all, must have been in all the same.

But in the history of this new Sect, one of the most striking circumstances is the discordancy of the doctrines which its Founders taught. For though they both asserted, that the Spirit of Truth had instructed them in what they were to teach mankind, nevertheless, in the doctrines which they delivered, they were perpetually at variance, not only with each other, but with themselves. Thus one of them at one time asserted, that holiness, whether of heart, or of life, was not a condition of our acceptance with God; and at another he declared that it was ^b. In like

^b “The condition of our acceptance with God is not our holiness, either of heart or of life, but faith alone: faith as *contradistinguished* from holiness, as well as from good works.” *Wesley, Preface to Hymns*. But in his Sermon on Ephes. ii. 8.—“We speak of a faith, which is *necessarily inclusive of all good works, and all holiness*.” *Gentleman's Mag.* vol. ix. p. 358.

manner the other of these Sectaries, although he was so zealous an advocate for Calvinism, as even to assure his followers, that it had been taught him of God himself, nevertheless professed doctrines directly contrary to it; he acknowledged that he had been mistaken; he recanted; and then he taught the same opinions again, with even greater warmth than before ^c.

Great however as may be the inconsistency of the doctrines of these new Teachers, when compared with themselves; if we compare together what they each respectively taught, we shall discover an inconsistency even still more striking. For though one of them declared, that the Holy Ghost taught him “plainly the knowledge of divine things, “even in the minutest circumstances ^d,” the

For other inconsistencies, see Tucker’s History of Methodism, p. 31. et seq.

^c See Tucker’s History of Methodism, p. 20.

^d “The Holy Spirit from time to time has led me into the “knowledge of divine things; and I have been directed, by “watching and reading the Scriptures on my knees, even in “the minutest circumstances, as plainly as the Jews were, when “consulting the Urim and Thummim at the High Priest’s “breast.” *Account of God’s Dealings*, p. 34. “Alas! I never “read any thing that Calvin wrote; my doctrines I had from “Christ, and his Apostles; I was taught them of God.” *Lett.* 214. “Election is a doctrine, which I thought, and do now

other asserted, that the Almighty had ordered him to oppose these very doctrines, which had been thus communicated, as impious, and as destructive of the Gospel of Christ^e.

To detail the manner in which they conducted themselves when they separated, each professedly preaching a different Gospel, would be to wound the ears of a pious congregation. They describe themselves as consulting the Almighty in a manner equally puerile and superstitious; they accuse God of having deceived them, in terms both impious and unequivocal; and they are guilty of such deliberate falsehood, as no one could have been, who really was guided by the Holy Ghost, and filled, as they declared themselves to have been, with God. The bitter wrath, the strife, the fierce dissensions that immediately followed, it were painful, and humiliating to enumerate^f.

“believe, was taught me of God.” *Gillies’ Life of Whitefield*, p. 68.

^e See *Gentleman’s Magazine*, vol. xi. p. 322. There Mr. Wesley declares, “that he has an immediate call from God to “preach and publish to the world, that Mr. Whitefield’s doctrine is highly injurious to Christ.”

^f See the whole of this transaction, as related by Mr. Whitefield, in his Letter to Mr. Wesley, on the subject; *Works*, vol. iv. p. 53. See also Wesley’s Fourth Journal, p. 59. et seq. *Gentleman’s Magazine*, vol. xi. p. 321. and *Coke’s Life of Wesley*, p. 210. et seq. Mr. Wesley expelled from his society
some

Nor need we insist upon them. Let us attend solely to the statement of the case. We are solemnly assured by two men, that they were each sent by the Almighty to preach the pure Gospel of Salvation. We find however, that they not only contradicted one another, but that each considered himself as commanded by the Almighty to oppose the doctrine which the other taught. One of them therefore must have been under the influence of delusion. But when we find that neither of them was consistent with himself; when we discover that, though they affirmed that they had been divinely instructed what to teach, they nevertheless both of them professed one day, doctrines which they disclaimed, and controverted on the next; we have no alternative, but to conclude, that they both must have been alike deluded by the Spirit of Enthusiasm. *Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter?* Can the God

some who had attended Mr. Whitefield's meetings. It should be observed, that the latter has promised Mr. Wesley *never* to preach against him. This promise he immediately broke; and gave as an excuse, "that the promise given was only an effect of human weakness; he was now of another mind." *Coke's Life*, p. 214. Nor is this the only occasion on which Mr. Whitefield seems to have been guilty of deliberate breach of promise. See Whitehead's *Life of Wesley*, vol. i. p. 206.

§ James iii. 11.

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of Truth teach two contrary doctrines to be equally true ?

And now, since it is evident that this new Sect, though it was declared to have been sealed with every mark of a divine signature, is sealed with none : since its truth is attested by no internal evidence, inasmuch as the doctrines which its Authors taught are contradictory both to themselves and to the Scriptures: since too it is equally destitute of all external evidence ; because, first, no prophecies were accomplished ; and secondly, because none of those works were performed, which are always offered in proof of a divine mission ; the conclusion which we are to draw is obvious. They who could notwithstanding have believed that the work proceeded from the Almighty ; and could have thought that they were commissioned by him to be its Ministers, must have acted under impressions made on their minds by the force of mere imagination ; and afford as melancholy an instance of enthusiastic delusion as perhaps was ever recorded in the annals of the Christian Church.

Such are the arguments which may be adduced to prove, that the Authors of the Sect before us were, in the strict meaning of the word, Enthusiasts. And it will give weight to all our several conclusions to add, that
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one of them has, even in the most unequivocal manner, confessed himself to have been deluded in the manner we suppose. I refer not to the mode in which he describes himself to have been regenerated; although nothing can be met with in the history of Pagan Enthusiasm more characteristic of delusion^h. Neither do I allude to his own declaration, that “ the Holy Ghost over-ruled “ and forced his willⁱ;” although this like-

^h The Account of God’s Dealings with Mr. Whitefield contains the account of his regeneration. The whole of that work is particularly recommended to the attention of those who wish to form a just opinion of Mr. W.’s conduct. For not only does it give an accurate detail of the progress of his delusion; but that progress corresponds, in many points, exactly with what has been pointed out in the First Lecture, to be the usual progress of Enthusiasm. It should be observed, that Mr. W. declares, that the Holy Ghost assisted him particularly to write, and directed him to publish that work. The several passages which have been already quoted from it will be thought perhaps sufficient to prove, that it could not have been dictated by any other Spirit than by that of the grossest Enthusiasm. Mr. W. says, he was fully convinced that the Devil had actual “ possession of, and power over, his body,” p. 22. And we are almost led to believe, that he asserts, that he actually saw the Devil, and conversed with him. p. 22, 23, 24, 25.

ⁱ “ Mr. Whitefield boasts that he has received extraordinary “ illuminations, and surprising influxes of the Holy Spirit; “ and that it not only appealed to his understanding, but “ even *over-ruled* and forced his will.” *Gentleman’s Magazine*, vol. ix. p. 294. “ To-day my Master, (Christ) by his Providence and Spirit, *compelled* me to preach in the church-yard “ at Islington: to-morrow I am to repeat that *mad trick*; and “ on

wife has been proved to be eminently characteristic of the enthusiastic Spiritⁱ, but I allude to these still more express and unambiguous words: “I do confess that imagination has
 “mixed itself with the work I have performed:—I own too, that I have made
 “impressions without the written word, my
 “rule of acting: I have been too bitter
 “in my zeal; wild-fire has mixed with it;
 “and I find I have frequently written and
 “spoken too much in mine own spirit, when
 “I thought I was writing and speaking
 “tirely by the assistance of the Spirit of
 “God^k.”

Are these declarations such as are consistent with the character of a man who was filled with the Holy Ghost? of one who

“on Sunday to go out into Moorfields. God strengthens me
 “exceedingly. I preach till I sweat through and through.”
Lett. 46.

ⁱ See page 26.

^k See Works, vol. iv. p. 243. But this confession did neither make him alter his conduct, nor lower his pretensions. In the very tract where it was made he urges his claims as explicitly as before, though in terms somewhat more guarded. One consequence of this confession indeed was, that he republished his Journals, and the accounts of God’s dealings with him, leaving out many of the most offensive passages. Yet even that corrected edition of those works contains sufficient evidence to prove, that he acted under the influence of strong enthusiastic delusion.

talked

talked with God, as he assures us he had done, as a man with his friend? who was confident that the blessed Jesus was ever present with him, and dwelt continually in his soul¹? Unquestionably they are not: and what is the inference to be drawn in consequence? Let us for a moment suppose that the Apostles had been called upon to reconsider their conduct. Would they have been obliged to own, upon reflection, that they had been deluded by the force of Imagination? Far, very far different would have been their language. They would have asserted, that they had at all times spoken the words of sober-mindedness and truth: and they would have confidently referred us to their writings for a testimony of the reality of their pretensions: those writings which have stood the test of so many ages, and cannot be charged in a single instance with error or Enthusiasm

¹ These, or similar expressions, occur in almost every page of Mr. Whitefield's writings: "I dwell in Christ, and Christ in me; he frequently manifests himself in such a manner, that it throws me into an agony." *Lett.* 229. "I feel his blessed Spirit filling my soul and body, as plain as I feel the air which I breathe, or the food I eat." *Lett.* 214. "I have a garden, where I go particularly to meet and talk with God. 204. And, not to multiply instances, in other places he uses these highly improper expressions: "I cannot tell how tenderly
" I am

We will suppose however, that the contrary had been the case : how should we then have been affected ? If one of the Evangelists, having published his Gospel, and having testified that it was true, because “ he knew “ that the Holy Ghost had called all things “ to his remembrance ; ” were afterwards to declare, that the greater part of what he had written was dictated by the Spirit of Enthusiasm, should we not acknowledge that the whole fabric of our faith would be in consequence shaken ? should we not call in question the reality of that Disciple’s mission ; and even renounce altogether a religion that was supported by testimony so equivocal ?

And shall we allow that a confession of this nature, had it been made by the Apostles of Christianity, would have been sufficient to have made us reject their preaching ? yet shall we not allow it to destroy the pretensions of the Apostles of a new Sect ? For, be it asked, why do we so jealously maintain that the Apostles were not Enthusiasts ? Certainly, because if

“ I am carried by our dear Saviour from day to day : I lean on “ Jesus’ bosom from morning to night ; yea, all the day long. “ I sweetly leaned on my Saviour’s bosom, and sucked out of “ the breasts of his consolation.” See *Bishop Lavington*, &c. vol. i. part 1. p. 52.

the

the charge could be proved against them, even in a solitary instance, this must affect the credit of every doctrine which they delivered. It is not with revealed truth, as it is with human systems. These latter may be adopted, though we believe that in some points they are erroneous: the former can be accepted only because they are in every part free from error. Could we imagine that a revelation were offered to us, which in part was true, and in part delusory, we might venture to say, that the result would be of the most alarming nature. For right, and wrong, coming to us proposed on an equal degree of authority, the bounds of good and evil would be in great measure confounded; and we should be perpetually disobeying God, at the time when we believed ourselves implicitly following the dictates of his will.

If then the charge of Enthusiasm once proved against the Apostles of Christianity, would justify our rejection of their doctrines; unless we permit the same consideration to have the same weight when it applies to the Apostles of this new Sect, we shall afford an additional proof of the propensity of the human heart to prefer its own inventions to the commands of God; and we shall, in a striking manner, verify the prediction of our
Divine

Divine Lord, who, accusing the Jews for their hardness of heart in rejecting his mission, though attested by every possible evidence, said, *I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another should come in his own name, him ye will receive*^m.

And now, having ascertained that the Founders of this Sect were Enthusiasts, in what manner shall we account for that high reverence, which, even in the present day, is still paid to their memory? Will it not be astonishing to hear some repeat, notwithstanding all that may be proved against them, that they were the peculiar favourites of Heaven, on whose ministry the Holy Ghost manifestly descended and restedⁿ? That they were Angels, to whom the everlasting Gospel^o was intrusted? and finally, that they bore (I almost hesitate to repeat the assertion,) “a near resemblance to the blessed Jesus^p: that there never was beheld so fair a copy of our Lord; such a living image of the Son of God^q?”

Not even to the best of men can expres-

^m John v. 43.

ⁿ Gillies' Life of Whitefield, p. 56, 94, and 305. Coke's Life of Wesley, 445, 522, 535, and 540.

^o Gillies' Life of Whitefield, p. 63. and 295.

^p Gillies' Life of Whitefield, p. 312.

^q Ditto, p. 185.

sions such as these be with justice applied ; but least of all to those, who, whatever their private virtues may have been, were disobedient and rebellious in the Church of Christ ; deceivers of themselves, by wilfully following their own vain imaginations ; deceivers of the people, by persuading them that the Lord *had said, albeit he had never spoken ; that he had bidden them to go forth, although he sent them not, nor commanded them*^r.

And now, what remains for us but to urge, that we, who have received an Apostolical Commission ; we, who enjoy the blessing of an Apostolical Communion, should steadily oppose, in every instance, the pretensions of the Enthusiast ? He, before whom we serve, is not the author of confusion, but the God of order, and of truth. May we not therefore venture to hope, that we are then faithfully employed in his service, when we endeavour to stop the progress of those errors and irregularities, which result from spiritual delusion ?

Nevertheless fatal might be the consequence, were we to presume so far upon the goodness of our own cause, as to employ any unreasonable asperity in exposing the errors of

^r Jeremiah xxiii. 21, 32. Ezekiel xiii. 6, 7.

the Enthusiastic Sectary. If we find that, even in temporal concerns, it is always prudent to urge our pretensions with gentleness, we cannot but acknowledge, that the way to make the claims of the Established Church respected, is to enforce them in the Spirit of Charity and Forbearance. Conscious that those claims are founded on a Rock, which can never be moved, even though the waves of Enthusiasm should rage horribly, and though the tide of popular innovation should beat unceasingly against it, let us ask, what good can be derived from the use of indiscriminate censure? We are not to vilify the persons of our opponents; it is only the erroneousness of their principles that we are called upon to disprove. Allowing therefore, that their wilful contempt of Church Unity; that their perversion of the simple truths of Scripture; and that their unjustifiable assumption of a divine commission, involves them in a responsibility of the most fearful nature, are we to add to their sorrows, by mixing unkindness and severity in our reproofs?

Surely this ought never so to be. If it become us, with the unshaken constancy of St. Paul, to declare, that we have not given place
to

to the Enthusiast *by subjection, no, not for an hour*^s; yet, remembering that common hope of Salvation to which we have all alike been called, it becomes us equally with the Prophet of Bethel, to mourn over the disobedient, and to say, *Alas ! my brother*^t.

Were we to adopt any other mode of conduct than this, we should shew that we were little acquainted with the human heart; which often will reject conviction, if urged with asperity: and we should give occasion to suspect that we knew still less that Spirit, which we are commanded to be of. For if when *the whole head was sick, and the whole heart was faint*^u, the Son of God is represented as coming *to bind, and not to break the bruised reed*^x; if, when we had wilfully wandered from the path of his commandments, He is described *as seeking after*^y us with the tenderest solicitude; if, though we hourly rebel against him, He, nevertheless, like a good shepherd, carries the *repentant in his bosom*^z, and gently leads them back to the pastures of eternal life; are we not instructed in all our controversies to quench every spark of bitterness and resentment; to temper reproof

^s Galat. ii. 5.

^t 1 Kings xiii. 30.

^u Isaiah i. 5.

^x Isaiah xlii. 3.

^y Luke xv. 4. xix. 10.

^z Isaiah xl. 11.

with charity ; to draw all men to their good by the cords of love ; and convince them, that we are actuated by no motive, but the desire of securing to them that well-founded hope of God's favour, which, if they confide in their own inventions, may be forfeited ; but which can never fail, so long *as they are fitly framed together in that holy Temple of the Lord^a*, in which Christ hath promised to be present, even unto the end of the world^b.

^a Ephesians ii. 21.

^b Matt. xxviii. 20.

SERMON V.

MICAH vi. 8.

HE HATH SHEWED THEE, O MAN, WHAT IS GOOD; AND WHAT DOTHTHE LORD REQUIRE OF THEE, BUT TO DO JUSTLY, AND TO LOVE MERCY, AND TO WALK HUMBLY WITH THY GOD?

WE have shewn in the preceding Lecture, that the Schism, of which the Authors of this new Sect were guilty, was the immediate consequence of their Enthusiasm. It now remains for us to point out the cause in which that Enthusiasm originated. And as it has been established^a, that Pride, and Vanity, and Ambition, are the principal, if not the sole causes of Enthusiastic delusion in general, we may expect to find that these passions produced that particular instance of it, which is the immediate subject of our consideration.

We could willingly consent indeed to pass

^a See page 42. et seq.

over this point in silence. And, as it is our sole object to establish, that no enthusiastic belief in particular communications can ever justify a separation from an Apostolically constituted Church, perhaps it might be thought sufficient to have proved the reality of the Enthusiasm, without adverting to the principle from which it may be supposed to have proceeded.

But were we to omit this part of our enquiry, it is more than probable that we should fail of attaining the very end for which, principally, it was instituted. When we undertook to shew the evils which unavoidably result from Religious Enthusiasm, we did it in order to prove the absolute necessity of repressing every emotion of spiritual pride and ambition; those being the passions in which that delusion originates. The motive however which led us thus to make pride and vanity, and ambition particularly, the objects of animadversion, was this; that many people, who would think it sinful to yield to their suggestions in worldly concerns, seem not to be so much upon their guard as they ought to be, against their influence in such pursuits as are connected with religion. And yet we may fairly question, whether there be any virtue, the exercise of which is more positively enjoined us in Scripture, on all occasions,

sions, than that of humility. Nor is it there spoken of merely as a quality which gives a grace to the performance of other duties ; it is rather described to be an essential mean, by which we may attain to a knowledge of our duties, and persevere in the practice of them. Thus the inspired Writer of the text declares, that if it be the immediate object of Revelation to *shew us what is good*, it is equally its object to tell us, that this good consists not only in *loving mercy, and in doing justice*, but also in *walking humbly with our God*. It cannot therefore be recalled to our minds too frequently, that the breach of this latter, no less than of the former duties, is both injurious to the prospects of the Christian's hope, and detrimental to the purity of the Christian's faith. A reference to the history of past events will sufficiently establish the truth of this position.

Had it not been for spiritual pride, which has so often made men wish to be thought *some great one* ; and for spiritual ambition, which has led them to aim at governing the consciences of numerous followers, the greater part of those Sects, which in past ages have rent the suffering Church, would have never existed ^b. Perhaps too we may add, in refer-

^b The accounts that have been left us of the several Sects

ence to those Sectaries, whose delusive pretensions we have examined, that, had they not suffered themselves to have been influenced by these passions, they never would have disturbed the peace of our Communion.

Should this be proved to have been the case, probably it will be allowed, that no instance of enthusiastic delusion could have afforded a more striking example of its destructive power than the present. Had the persons in question been men of extreme ignorance ; had their lives been vicious, and their

which from time to time have arisen in the Church, are such as do not suffer us to doubt as to the principles in which they originated. The power which their separate Authors obtained ; the praises which they courted, and the adulation which they received ; clearly prove that pride and ambition must have been the leading motives of their conduct. In fact, it is manifest that the Apostles themselves regarded those passions to be the causes of Schism. For when St. Paul reproved the Corinthians, the language he employed, shews that he considered the love of power and distinction to have been the real motives which actuated the Leaders of those Sects which then disturbed the Church. See 1 Cor. iii. 3, 4, 5. and compare with ch. iv. 6. See also Grotius in loc. who says, “ Nominibus quidem (Pauli et Apollo) utebantur ; sed principes sectarum sub hoc prætextu suo honori et commodis velificabantur.” It is in reference to these passions, that the words of St. Paul, *Are ye not carnal*, must be understood. Thus Theophylact : *Νυν δε λοιπον προς τας αρχομενης αποδεται, και φησιν, οτι εικοτως υμας σαρκικης οιομαζω, οπη γε εν υμιν ζηλος, και ερις, και διχοστασιαι—Πανταχθ δε τον ζηλον τη εριδι συναπλει. Παληρ γαρ ο ζηλος της εριδος αυτη δε τας διχοστασιαις γεννα.* Opera, vol. ii. p. 136.

abilities

abilities contemptible, then the argument to be drawn from the irregularity of their conduct could not have had much weight. But when it is seen that a piety, an ability, and a zeal, which might have adorned the Church of Christ, were diverted from their proper course, to support the cause of Schism, and to palliate the extravagancies of Enthusiasm; and when it may be shewn, that principles so unbecoming as spiritual pride and ambition were the probable causes which occasioned so fatal a perversion, the minds of the young cannot but be forcibly impressed with the necessity of preserving that lowliness of heart, which has uniformly been the characteristic of the truly religious man.

The object then of this present Lecture will be, to ascertain whether pride, and vanity, and ambition, were not, perhaps the sole, certainly the principal, causes which produced the enthusiastic delusion of the Authors of this new Communion.

It will be proper however to observe, that, before we enter on any enquiry, we should previously ascertain in our minds what evidence the point under consideration requires, and of what it is capable. In all such cases as admit of strict demonstration, any proof short of that may be rejected as insufficient.

But

But in those cases which admit only of high moral probability, if this can be obtained, we are as much bound in reason to assent to it, as to the strictest demonstration. Were not this principle granted, we never could speak with precision, concerning the causes of human action. Nay, there would evidently be an end to all reasoning whatsoever on this subject; inasmuch as a simple assertion, however captious, or however ill-founded, would be sufficient to invalidate every conclusion.

When therefore we would assign to any action the motive from which it may be supposed to have proceeded, having considered the nature of the action itself, and discovered what may be called its characteristic marks, if these be such as correspond with what are known to be the characteristic marks of any particular affection of the mind, we think that this is sufficient to justify us in referring such an action to that particular passion, as to its primary cause and original. Thus, whatever is done in the wilful intention of wantonly giving pain, may safely be attributed to cruelty: whatever is done in the disinterested intention of communicating general good, may, in like manner, be attributed to benevolence. Not that it always happens that each passion reveals itself, like those just specified,

cified, by some positive act. Far from it.— There are many which are to be discovered by the general character which they give to the whole conduct, rather than by any definite action. Of the number of these, are pride and vanity. Nevertheless, though they do not openly as it were announce themselves by any one particular act, still there are many evident signs by which their existence, as the principle of action, may be at all times inferred.

If these observations shall be admitted to be just, then, in proof of our assertion, that pride and vanity were the primary causes which produced the delusion of the Founders of this new Sect, we may be allowed to argue, from the temper of their writings, and from the bias of their actions in general, rather than from any confession which they have left us in particular. Should this be granted, the question might seem to be decided. For we may safely assert, that in almost every page they wrote, and every action they recorded, we cannot but be struck by the eagerness with which they grasp at public fame, and the complacency with which they record it^c.

^c The following expressions, selected as they occur in Mr. Whitefield's Journals, and which may be paralleled by similar expressions

We will readily allow, what they themselves alledge in their own defence, that it was improbable that the human heart should have been proof against those flattering distinctions which at so early a period of their lives they received^d. We cannot grant, however, that any argument can hence be drawn to prove that their pride was the result of their enthusiasm, rather than their enthusiasm of their pride. Were the former position to be admitted, the question would

expressions from the Journals of Mr. Wesley, will serve to shew in what manner of Spirit they are written. “ The tide of popularity began to run very high—I carried high sails; thousands and tens of thousands came to hear me—my sermons were every where called for—when I preached, one might walk on people’s heads. God suffered not my opposers to move a tongue against me—Trees and hedges were full; all was hushed when I began—God only can tell how the hearers were melted down; they would have plucked out their own eyes, and would have given them unto me—I was crouded, admired—saluted, hands kissed, hugged—they melt, weep, hang upon me, want to salute me—receive me as an Angel of God—their hearts leap for joy—bells ring—all agree that it was never seen on this wise before—various presents are sent as tokens of their love; a bank bill of ten pounds as a present to *myself*: this I took as a hint from Providence to go on. Thus shall it be done unto the man whom God delighteth to honour.” See *Bp. Lavington’s Enthusiasm*, &c. Vol. I. part ii. p. 15, 16.

^d See Whitefield’s Works, vol. iv. p. 242, 3, and Gillies’ Life, p. 289, 90.

be involved in all those difficulties from which we attempted to free it, at the beginning of our enquiry^e. For then, there being no principle to which their Enthusiasm could be referred, we should be compelled to adopt one of these two conclusions; either that it was a distinct quality of their minds, existing in them, independent of any cause; which idea has been shewn to be erroneous: or else, that it was the inspiration of a spiritual agent; a supposition, which, for evident reasons, we from the first determined altogether to exclude.

Yet, though some appear to doubt whether the love of praise and of distinction were not the consequence of their delusion, rather than the cause of it; surely a little reflection will convince us, that the contrary must have been the case. For it is evident, that these passions existed in their minds, and influenced their conduct, long antecedent to the period from which their Enthusiasm is to be dated. Thus the belief which they entertained, almost in infancy, of being destined to the accomplishment of some great event; and the expectation which they encouraged, of receiving some commission from

^e See page 36.

the Almighty, could only have proceeded from a predisposition of the heart to wish that such an honour might be conferred upon them^f. Besides which we are to remember, that the very praises which they received, were given them, not in order to induce them to assume the Apostolic character, but in consequence of their having claimed it.

If they were followed by thousands, and listened to by tens of thousands, surely it cannot be forgotten that this was not till after they had been announced as the Mes-

^f See page 205, and note e. Mr. Whitefield informs us, that as a child, he "was always fond of being a clergyman; " that he used frequently to imitate the ministers reading "prayers;" and that he was led, even at that early period, to pray over the 118th Psalm, which is eminently prophetic of the establishment of Christ's Spiritual kingdom. In another place he adds, "He who was with David, when he was following the "sheep big with young, was with me, when I washed mops, "cleaned rooms, and in a word became a professed and common "drawer (tapster at an inn); for I even then composed two or "three sermons." *Early Dealings*, p. 7, 8. There are few passages however, which more manifestly reveal his wishes, than that, in which he says, that he spent the last fortnight previous to his being ordained, "in reading the several *missions* of the "Prophets and Apostles; and in wrestling with God to give "him grace to follow their good examples." *Ibid.* p. 40. In his Eleventh Letter he has this remarkable expression: "I propose to enter into orders, and *then*, no doubt, my *call* will be "clear"

sengers, and the Angels of God^s. That their conviction of the truth of their claims was strengthened by the popularity which they obtained, we will readily allow : but what we here enquire is, not what confirmed, but what first excited their delusion. Had they not declared themselves to have received a divine commission till late in life, and that too, not till after they had enjoyed many years of distinguished honour and applause, then the argument would have assumed a different appearance. As it is, all circumstances considered, we cannot but infer, that they never would have been led to entertain opinions so enthusiastic as those which they professed, had it not been for those passions which induced them to hope that they might be honoured with some peculiar distinctions.

A reference to the conduct which the Founders of this Sect adopted, immediately

^s Both Mr. Wesley and Mr. Whitefield dwell with much complacency on the number of their auditors. They very frequently tell us, that their congregations amounted to 10, 15, and 20,000 persons. In one instance Mr. Whitefield says, that he preached to near 80,000, who kept a deep silence during the whole of his discourse. "I was weak in myself," he adds ; "yet God strengthened me to speak so loud, that most could hear ; and so powerfully, that most could feel." *Third Journal*, p. 111.

previous to their public assumption of the Apostolic character, will serve to confirm this conclusion.

Thus one of them relates, that early in life he was urged by the “injunctions of a
“venerable and declining parent, and by the
“welfare of a numerous and dependent family,” to take charge of a flock, which, with an unanimous voice, entreated him to become their Minister^h. These were confi-

^h “If you are not indifferent whether the labours of an
“aged father, for above forty years, in God’s vineyard be lost,
“and the fence of it trodden down and destroyed : if you consider that Mr. — must in all probability succeed to me, if
“you do not ; and the prospect of that mighty Nimrod’s
“coming hither shocks my soul, and is in a fair way to bring
“down my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave : if you have
“any care for our family, which must be dismally shattered as
“soon as I am dropped : if you reflect on the dear love and
“longing of this people for you ; you may perhaps alter your
“will, and bend your mind to Him, who has promised, ‘ if in
“all our ways we acknowledge him, he will direct our paths.”
Hampson, ut sup. p. 123. These solicitations, nevertheless, Mr. Wesley rejected. And (what will hardly be thought credible) when he visited the parish afterwards, he constantly chose his Father’s tomb-stone as the place whereon to stand and preach, in the church-yard, in opposition to the regular Minister. Surely a sentiment of filial piety ought to have led him to have selected at least another spot. But Enthusiasm triumphs over natural affection. Though his father was eminent for the purity of his faith, his zeal, his piety, and his charity, Mr. Wesley seems to insinuate, that he was but Pharisaical in his Religion. See *Coke’s Life of Wesley*, p. 227.

derations

derations of such weight, that it hardly seems possible that he could have disregarded them. He did disregard them however; and he justified his doing so by asserting, that retirement from the world was so absolutely
 “ necessary for the preservation of his virtue,
 “ that he could not quit it, even for a little,
 “ without manifest hazard to his salvation:
 “ that he might not attempt to do good in
 “ the way proposed, without great hazard to
 “ his own soulⁱ.” It is however much to be feared, that whilst he was arguing thus, he was deceiving himself as to the motives of his conduct; and that probably not the necessity of retirement, but the dislike of moving in a limited sphere, was the principle which led him to reject the offer that was made him. For when it was proposed to him, a short time afterwards, to undertake the conversion of the Indians, he immediately per-

ⁱ The arguments which Mr. Wesley used on this occasion may be found at full length in Hampson’s Life of Wesley, vol. i. p. 119. et seq. Coke’s Ditto, p. 72. et seq. Whitehead’s Ditto, vol. i. p. 154. et seq. and Wesley’s Letters, published by Priestley. It is not possible to imagine any thing more sophistical or contradictory than the Letters which Mr. Wesley wrote on this occasion. They clearly evince, however, that inflexibility of temper, which formed one of the leading features of his character, and which accounts, in a great measure, for his success in the establishment of his Communion.

ceived that this was a call from Heaven; and, after a few days deliberation, he undertook that arduous enterprize^k. How can so great an inconsistency be accounted for? That a zealous piety did not in some degree influence his decision no one can deny. But we must conjecture, that while his piety kindled at the idea of making the Gospel known to the savage nations of America, passions less amiable might have suggested, that as the light of Christianity should be diffused, the memory of his Apostolic labours also would be extended over the many kingdoms of the New World^l. Should this con-

^k The offer seems to have been made to Mr. Wesley the 28th of August, and he accepted it on the 9th or 10th of September. The interval was spent in going to several places, to consult his friends. As to his own sentiments, these, if we compare all the circumstances, appear to have been made up nearly from the beginning. One of his Biographers, indeed, says, that at first he refused the proposal; (Coke's Life, p. 93.) but this is contradicted by another. (See Whitehead's Life, vol. i. p. 490.)

^l "It seems to have been the general opinion, that Mr. Wesley had determined, while at Oxford, to place himself at the head of a Sect, and had projected his plan long before its execution, in the commencement of itinerancy, and the other deviations from the Establishment. The motto in one of his prints, which is supposed to have had a mystical, as well as a literal meaning; his sudden departure from the University; his voyage to America; and his journey to Germany, have concurred, with other circumstances, to con-
"firm

jecture, as to the motives which influenced his conduct, be thought uncharitable, we are not to be blamed. It is not ours; it is that of his own Apologist, who declares, “ that had
“ he acted otherwise on this occasion, though
“ he might have been admired as a scholar
“ and a man, he never could have ranked as
“ an Apostle ^m. ”

As to the other Founder of this Sect, he has himself explicitly revealed to us the motive which first impelled him to adopt that Apostolical ⁿ mode of Evangelizing, which he

“ firm many in this opinion.” *Hampson's Life*, &c. vol. iii. p. 23. Mr. Hampson does not subscribe to it himself: but, as he asserts that the great defect of Mr. Wesley's character was the *love of power*; and as he proves with what perseverance he fought, and with what obstinacy he maintained the right of governing his Sect *absolutely*, we still shall be inclined to think, that ambition might have been the leading motive which induced Mr. Wesley to form a religious Sect. See Hampson *ut sup.* vol. iii. p. 202.

^m “ Had he had only what has been called rational principles of Religion, he might have gone the usual rounds of patriarchial duty at Epworth; and, it may be, might have succeeded to what is called a *better living*. But however he might be
“ admired as a scholar and a man, he certainly never would
“ have been ranked with the Apostles; nor would the present,
“ not to say future generations, rise up, and call him blessed.” *Coke's Life of Wesley*, p. 90.

ⁿ Nothing could be more improper than the manner in which Mr. Whitefield attempted to defend that mode of conduct which he adopted. He did it by taking every occasion to call our Blessed Lord and his Apostles Itinerants, Field-preachers,

afterwards believed himself to have been commissioned by the Almighty to pursue. He tells us, that the accounts which he received of the labours of his venerable Father in the Gospel “ first fired his soul, and made him long to go “ abroad for God : that he felt an almost irresistible attraction in his soul towards the “ undertaking ; that his thoughts were continually crowding towards this point ; that “ he refused to undertake any fixed employment in England, because he felt no inclination ; and that when at last the wished-for suggestion was placed before him, his “ heart leaped within him, and echoed to the “ call °.” Such are his own declarations.

Preachers to mobs and rabble, &c. See Works, vol. iv. p. 138, 232. In consequence of which he represents Itinerancy, as he practised it, to be the good old Apostolical way of Evangelizing. He acknowledged indeed, that this practice was contrary to the laws of the Church of England ; but he says, “ When Canons “ are invented and compiled by men of little hearts, and bigotted principles, on purpose to hinder persons of more enlarged souls from doing good—like the withes with which “ the Philistines bound Sampson, in my opinion, they may “ very legally be broken.” *Lett. 1119.*

° See Mr. Whitefield's Further Account of God's Dealings with him, as published, “ revised, corrected, and abridged,” with his Journals, p. 26. et seq. For the manner in which he spoke of his subsequent conduct, see his works in general, particularly his controversial pieces in the Fourth vol. of his works. This single instance may serve as a specimen. “ As for all those “ (as one expresses it) who are for clipping the wings of the
“ Mystic

And if we compare them with the early dispositions which he manifested, and consider the complacency which he afterwards testified at having deviated from that regular path; which would have confined him to one limited sphere of action, we shall probably rest satisfied, that those passions, which have been assigned generally as the exciting causes of Enthusiasm, produced it in his particular instance ^P.

“ Mystic Dove, and for confining the power and the Spirit of God
“ within the bounds of human establishments, I am well aware
“ of what opposition I must continue to meet with from that
“ quarter. But blessed be God, there are some few amongst us
“ that are men of greater latitude; who can think, and dare
“ speak more worthily of God’s sovereignty; and acknowledge
“ a work to be his, though it be not according to the exact
“ measure of canonical fitness. Among these,” he continues,
“ I shall be sure to find hearty friends, and well-wishers. And
“ if, by others of more confined principles, I am for this ac-
“ counted an Enthusiast, or any thing else, they are very wel-
“ come to confer that, or any other title upon me.” *Works*,
vol. iv. p. 248. See Gillies’ Life, p. 313, 339.

^P The manner, in which Mr. Whitefield speaks of his itinerating mode of life, seems to prove manifestly that, even in this respect also, he had deceived himself; and that his own natural inclination, not any divine suggestion, had led him to follow the method which he pursued. “ Itinerating was my delight: I love to range in the American woods. I am frequently tempted to wish myself dead, since my disorder keeps me from my old delightful work. This spiritual hunting is delightful sport.” *Gillies’ Life*, p. 151, 152, 226, 236.

Such then is the inference which we would draw from an examination of the conduct which was adopted by the Founders of this new Sect, previous to their having claimed a divine commission. Let us now see whether the language, which they employed after that the claim had been made, be such as will justify our conclusion. And we would observe, that if pride and ambition were not the passions which influenced their conduct, we shall find them, like the Apostles, forgetful of themselves, and referring every thing to the glory of God alone. If however, the contrary be the case, we then may expect that they will magnify their own character and importance; that they will dwell on the great achievements which they performed; and that they will recur perpetually to the praises which they received from the admiring world.

On this issue the whole question might rest. For the language which they employed, when speaking of themselves, is too unequivocal to admit of any mis-construction. Thus one of them exclaims, “ We go from
“ conquering to conquer : Hell trembles be-
“ fore us—every thing falls before me. God
“ himself suggests to me, that I go like
“ Joshua,

“ Joshua, subduing the devoted nations, and
“ dividing the land ^q. ”

Nor are the expressions which the other
used less characteristic of pride and vanity.
“ When I appeared,” he says, “ I was called
“ the blessed of the Lord ;” and in another
place, “ Give me but where to stand,” he
exclaims, “ and by my preaching I could shake
“ the earth ^r. ”

Unquestionably there is but one construc-
tion which can be given to these expressions.
In fact, they reveal so explicitly the passions
which must have occupied the minds of those
who used them, that we are astonished to
think that they could ever have been em-
ployed. But it is an important, though a

^q See Bp. Lavington’s *Enthusiasm, &c.* Vol. I. part ii. p. 16.
So in other places : “ Thousands and ten thousands follow us :
“ the fire is kindled ; and I know that all the Devils in Hell
“ shall not be able to quench it.—Well may the Devil and his
“ servants rage horribly ; their kingdom is in danger.” *Bp.*
Lavington, ut sup. p. 3.

^r Wesley’s *Fourth Journal*, p. 83. “ Seeing many rich at
“ Clifton, my heart was much pained for them ; but full as I
“ was, I knew not where to begin, till my Testament opened
“ on these words : “ I came not to call the righteous, but sinners
“ to repentance ;’ in applying which my soul was so enlarged,
“ that methought I could have cried out, (in another sense
“ than poor vain Archimedes) ‘ Give me but where to stand,
“ and I will shake the earth.” *Ditto, Third Journal*, p. 61.

trite observation, that truth only is consistent with itself. Whatever be the appearance which error may assume, it will at all times supply the proof by which its fallacious claims may be detected. Were it not for this, we should be at a loss to account for the imprudence which dictated the following extraordinary declaration. For surely a little reflection might have convinced any one, that no dispassionate person could have heard it, and have afterwards believed, that he who was capable of making it, had been raised up by the Almighty to govern the Church, and to vindicate the purity of the Gospel of the meek and unassuming Jesus. “So much,” says one of the Authors of this Sect, “so much did
 “my popularity increase, that, no longer
 “able to walk on foot as usual, I was constrained to ride through the streets, that
 “I might avoid the Hosanna’s of the multitude^s.”

^s See Bp. Lavington’s Enthusiasm, Vol. I. part i. p. 19. There is another instance of Mr. Whitefield’s applying to himself, words that can be applied only to our Blessed Lord, which is perhaps even still more offensive to Christian piety than that which has been quoted above. “Though Satan for some
 “weeks had been *biting my heel*, God was pleased to shew me
 “that I should soon *bruise his head*.” *God’s early Dealings with Mr. Whitefield*, p. 27. It need hardly be remarked, that these words are a repetition of those, in which the Almighty first
 promised

What ! shall any human being arrogate to himself that peculiar and awful salutation, by which the mission of the Son of God, sent indeed to save and to instruct the world, was acknowledged ? Shall any one affect to imitate that holy triumph, in which the Blessed Jesus ascended to Jerusalem, surrounded by the multitudes, whom he had healed in his mercy ; had supported by his miracles ; and had enlightened by his truth ?

But no comparison need here be made. It is not even to be believed that the Enthusiast in question intended, when he applied Hossanna's to himself, any wilful irreverence or impiety. We must insist, however, that one who could deliberately adapt to his own person such marks of divine distinction as he found had characterized in Scripture, not merely the Apostles and Prophets^t, but even

promised Salvation to mankind, by his only begotten Son. Gen. iii. 15.

^t Thus Mr. Whitefield tells us, that, previous to ordination, he was " so restrained, that he could not compose a sermon." He made importunate supplication to God to know whether this restraint came from him. And at last he is made quite easy, by being directed to the passage in Ezekiel, wherein God said to that *young Prophet*, just after he had given him *a divine and public commission*, " Thou shalt be dumb ; but when I speak unto thee, then thou shalt speak out." *Early Dealings*, &c. p. 40. The restraint however remaining, so that he could not even preach, though

the Son of God, must be considered as having been stimulated to make the application by pride, and vanity ; for those were the only passions by which it could have been suggested.

Absolute indeed was the ascendancy which spiritual pride and vanity appear to have gained over the Founders of this new Communion. For we find, that when they were employed in the solemn office of religious worship, and addressing their Creator in prayer, even then their minds were, but too often, intent on marking their own superiority ; and in fondly grasping at every little circumstance that could give them importance. If the Scriptures recorded particular instances of patience, or of virtue ; if they announced the appearance of the Messengers of Heaven ; or if they spoke of eminent trials to be endur-

though much solicited, he waited upon God in prayer, to know what he would have him do : “ Upon which,” he adds, “ these
 “ words, ‘ Speak out, Paul,’ then came with great power to my
 “ soul. God spoke to me by his spirit, and I was no longer
 “ dumb.” *Ibid.* p. 41. When being ordained, he says, “ As I
 “ went up to the altar, I could think of nothing but Samuel’s
 “ standing, a little child, before the Lord, with a linen Ephod.”
Ibid. And after ordination his language is, “ I feel the Holy
 “ Ghost as much as Elifha did, when Elijah dropt his mantle ;
 “ a double portion of his spirit is upon me indeed.” *Bp. La-*
wington’s Entbus. &c. Vol. I. part ii. p. 29.

ed,

ed, and eminent glory to be obtained, they but too clearly shewed that they themselves believed, and that they wished that others should believe, that those Scriptures spoke of them. “While I was reading St. Paul’s description of himself,” says one of the Authors of the Sect, “I could not forbear *blushing much*: the people were intent upon me; their eyes bespoke the language of their hearts; each seemed to say, Thou art the man^u.” Surely if we can ever be justified in arguing from the nature of the effect, to the cause, we are authorised to infer, that the delusion of this Enthusiast must have proceeded from an eager longing after spiritual distinction; must have been excited by the belief that he was in some shape wor-

^u “The lessons were very remarkable, and the people made an application for me: the first was, the opposition made against Aaron’s priesthood, and God’s determining who was in the right, by causing his rod to blossom, when the other rods produced nothing. *So let it happen, O Lord, to me, thy unworthy servant!* The second was, 2 Cor. xi. where St. Paul recounted his sufferings for Christ, against the insinuations of the false Apostles. Blessed be God, in most of the things there recorded, I have in some small degree had fellowship with the Apostle: and before I die, I doubt not but I shall sympathise with him in other articles.” *Whitefield’s Third Journal*, p. 30. Mr. W. frequently declared, that he expected to suffer martyrdom, for preaching the Gospel, as he did.

thy

thy to enjoy the glorious pre-eminence of the Apostolic character *.

If more positive proof than deductions such as these be required, we may ask, and let every one answer the question impartially for himself, whether it be likely that more positive proof can ever be expected? Each Enthusiast, no doubt, will think that he is worthy to receive the distinction which he fancies he has obtained. It is not to be expected however that any one, in whom the rational faculties remain entire, should so far forget all

* There are few instances in which the application of Scripture events, made by these Enthusiasts to themselves, is more offensive than in the following. It is recorded, (Acts ii. 2.) that "the Holy Ghost descended with a sound as of a mighty rushing wind:" and (iv. 31.) that when they had prayed, "the place was shaken, where they were assembled together, and they were filled with the Holy Ghost." So Mr. Whitefield says, "The Spirit at length came down, like a mighty rushing wind, and carried all before it.—In my prayer the *power of God came down*, and gave a great *shock*—such an abiding universal shock I never knew before. In the afternoon the shock was very great—the place was almost rent by the power and presence of God." See *Rp. Lavington's Enthusiasm*, &c. Vol. I. part i. p. 60. who justly remarks, "Some of these expressions imply, that the Holy Ghost descended on the Methodists, in the same manner as upon the Apostles at Pentecost. Which, without much better proof than they have given of their inspiration, I will by no means undertake to excuse from blasphemy."

humility,

humility, should so entirely overlook the sinfulness of human nature as to assert, that he grounded his belief in the reality of his mission, upon the conviction that the Almighty could not have selected a more fit person, on whom to confer it. If holy David is known to have said, “ *Who am I, Lord God, that thou shouldest bestow on me the promise of the kingdom^y ?*” if he, who was miraculously called to deliver the Children of Israel, should exclaim, “ *Who am I, that I should bring them forth^z ?*” it seems in no shape probable, that any one could ever arrogate to himself a peculiar fitness to receive a divine commission. Were he to do so, doubtless this would be considered as a decisive proof both of his Enthusiasm, and of the cause which had produced it: but is this a proof which ever can be reasonably expected? Certainly it is not. Yet even this proof has been afforded us by one of the Authors of the Sect in question.

“ I know,” he says, “ that the establishment of our Communion may be opposed, because many of its Teachers are reputed bad. But with regard to myself, the wisdom of God has guarded against this pretence in a remarkable manner.” Then

^y 2 Samuel vii. 18.

^z Exodus iii. 11.

enumerating the particulars of his life, he says,
 “ What a surprising apparatus of Providence
 “ is here ! What person could have been less
 “ liable to objection than myself, whom the
 “ Almighty hath employed ? Indeed, I can-
 “ not devise what manner of man could have
 “ been more unexceptionable, on all accounts.
 “ I see not what God could have done more
 “ in this respect, which he hath not done ;
 “ nor what instrument he could have em-
 “ ployed in such a work, less liable to ex-
 “ ception ^a.”

How would the spirit of St. Paul have
 glowed with indignation, could he have heard
 such sentiments as these ! How would he
 have abhorred himself could he ever have
 been induced to employ a language so pre-
 sumptuous ! And yet, if ever any person,
 surely he might have had occasion to glory.
 His revelations were more abundant than
 those which his fellow-labourers enjoyed ^b.
 His call to the ministry was, in one respect,
 even more immediately from God, than that
 which the other Apostles received ^c. The

^a See Mr. Wesley's Third Appeal, p. 114. et seq.

^b 2 Cor. xii. 1, 7. Galat. i. 11, 12.

^c Galat. i. 1. “ Munus hoc (Apostolatus) mihi, neque ab
 “ hominibus suo pte arbitrato impositum est ; neque etiam Dei
 “ jussu, per meros homines, quomodo multi in ecclesiis ordinati
 “ fuere

purity of his intentions was unimpeached: his zeal, his sufferings, his patience, were unexampled^d. Yet all this was so far from suggesting to his mind that he was the fittest person that could have been selected to perform the work assigned to him, that his unassuming spirit was filled with wonder and self-abasement, when he contemplated the amazing love of his heavenly Master, in condescending to employ an instrument so weak, and so unworthy.

But enough on this unpleasing subject. More evidence, were it necessary, might be brought to shew the reasonableness of the conclusions on which we would insist. What has been adduced will probably be thought sufficient. We will therefore, after urging somewhat at length such previous reflections, as may serve to justify the method which we have followed in this enquiry, proceed to draw a general inference from the several points which have been established.

When we undertook to prove the Enthu-

"fuere per Apostolos, dictante Spiritu, ut Matthias, ab Apostolis nominatus; sed ab ipso Christo, jam extra homines in Divinâ potestate constituto." *Grotius in loc.*

^d 2 Cor. xi. 23. et seq.

fiasm of the Authors of this new Sect, we confined ourselves to the consideration of one particular circumstance, namely, their belief in a Divine Commission. But though this was done, it is not to be thence concluded that there is no other point, in which they were deluded by the force of an Enthusiastic imagination. The fact is far otherwise. If one point alone has been considered, it is because this method of treating the question was judged to be the most simple. For it was argued, that could it be made manifest that these Teachers were Enthusiasts, though but in one instance, it then would follow as a natural consequence, that every reasonable person would acknowledge both the danger and the impropriety of admitting them to be their guides in matters of such infinite importance as religious faith, and practice.

Yet for fear there should be any mis-apprehension, we will suggest, that there is probably no circumstance which can be considered to be truly characteristic of Enthusiasm, that may not be found to mark the conduct, the sentiments, and the pretensions of these Secretaries. Is it a sign of Enthusiasm to feel irresistible impulses? these they unequivocally asserted

asserted themselves to have experienced^e. Is it another proof of this delusion to claim the power of prophesying? This likewise they pretended to^f. Again. Do Enthusiasts call

^e See p. 251. note i. Nothing can be more characteristic of Enthusiasm than the claims which both Mr. Wesley and Mr. Whitefield made to sympathetic feelings, and to impulses which irresistibly led them to particular actions. Thus Mr. Whitefield says, "I was enlarged in intercession, and had reason to believe that there was a sweet communion kept up between us and our friends on shore." *Fifth Journal*, p. 21. So Mr. Wesley, when in Holland, sees a stranger come into company, "and finds a particular desire to pray for him." *Coke's Life*, &c. p. 437. Mr. Whitefield going to a Quaker's Meeting, feels somewhat "of a sympathy with the man that spoke." *Fifth Journal*, p. 27. And another time he says, "I observed for some time past, when praying for the King, whether I would or not, out came this petition: 'Lord, cover thou his head in the day of battle.' I wondered, even while I was praying, why I prayed so, *not knowing* that he was gone to Germany to fight." These supernatural impressions were sometimes made upon the minds of their followers. Thus Mr. Wesley being very ill in Ireland, prayer was made for his recovery; and it is said, that two preachers, praying for him at the same period, the one in Ireland, the other in England, "had those words, which were spoken of Hezekiah, 'I will add, saith the Lord, unto his days fifteen years,' impressed upon their minds, with remarkable force. After this Mr. W. lived fifteen years (which was the number of the years added unto Hezekiah's life,) and a few months." *Coke's Life*, &c. p. 398.

^f See Wesley's Fourth Journal, p. 26. So also Mr. Whitefield: "God will make his power to be known in me. I shall be exalted. There certainly will be a fulfilling of those things which God by his spirit hath spoken to my soul. There are many promises to be fulfilled in me. I know not

on Heaven to attest visibly the truth of their assertions^s? do they declare that they are favoured with immediate communications of knowledge, and powers of utterance^h? do

“ what will befall me, save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in
 “ every place, that labours, afflictions, and trials of all kinds,
 “ abide me. This I know, that what I have spoken from God,
 “ will come to pass; lo! it will.” See *Bp. Lavington's Enthus.*
Vol. I. part ii. p. 40. and *Bp. Gibson against Enthusiasm*, p. 20.

s “ I have been credibly informed, that Mr. Wesley has
 “ prayed, that God would visibly manifest some token of his
 “ favour; and presently after, that there were persons that
 “ screamed out, and put their bodies into violent agitations
 “ and distortions, seeming all over convulsed, to the great fright
 “ and amazement of several people. But upon others offering
 “ their assistance, Mr. Wesley called out, ‘ Let them alone; they
 “ can no more help it, than the sun can cease to shine:’ and
 “ then they went to prayers, and sung an hymn invoking the
 “ Holy Ghost to come down among them; and afterwards re-
 “ turned thanks that he was come.” *Tucker's Reply to White-*
field, &c. Gent. Mag. vol. ix. p. 295.

h “ I fear I should *quench the Spirit*, if I do not go on to
 “ speak as he gives me utterance.” *Whitefield's Third Journal*,
 p. 17. “ My heart was full of God, and I spoke as one having
 “ authority.” *Ibid.* p. 108. “ The Lord gave me the text I
 “ preached on, just before meeting; directed me to a method
 “ as I was going up the pulpit stairs—the effects plainly shewed
 “ that it was of God. At another time, I was so ill, that my
 “ friends advised me to go home: I went on; began preaching,
 “ and found my heart somewhat refreshed: but all on a sudden
 “ my soul was so carried out to talk against depending on our
 “ natural reason, that my friends were astonished, and so was I
 “ too; for I felt the Holy Ghost come upon me.” *Ditto Seventh*
Journal, p. 66. 67. So Mr. Wesley also says, “ If I hold my
 “ tongue,

they say they are supported by a peculiar providenceⁱ? do they describe ecstastic raptures and ravishments of soul^k? In all these points the language and the claims of the Founders of this new Communion are unequivocal; so that, perhaps, there cannot be imagined any instance of Enthusiasm, which unites more of the circumstances which are characteristic of that delusion, than theirs^l.

"tongue, I shall give up the ghost." *Coke's Life*, p. 490. To shew how little these claims can be attended to, it will be sufficient to observe, "that Socinus also pretended to a divine assistance, in those dangerous interpretations which he has given us of several passages in Scripture." *Green on Enthusiasm*, p. 44.

ⁱ Thus Mr. Whitefield frequently says, that he is astonished how he lives; that he lives by miracle; that he is immortal, till his work is done. See Gillies' *Life*, p. 180. see also *Ibid.* p. 142, 3. see also *Coke's Life of Wesley*, p. 493.

^k So Mr. Wesley: "My soul was got up into the Holy Mount. I had no thoughts of coming down again into the body." And Mr. Whitefield: "God filled me with such unspeakable raptures, particularly once in St. John's church, that I was carried beyond myself." *Bp. Lavington's Enthus.* Vol. I. part i. p. 74, 5. "The Lord is pleased to fill me out of his divine fulness; and to shew me more of the glories of the upper world." *Whitefield's Fifth Journal*, p. 22. In another place he even asserts positively, that "Jesus Christ caused much of his glory to pass before him." *Lett.* 503.

^l If we were to compare all that Mr. Wesley and Mr. Whitefield have recorded of their own experiences and sensations, with

Let it not be thought that this conclusion will go to detract from them that love of God, and that desire of doing good which it is asserted that they felt in an eminent degree, and which we have acknowledged them to have possessed. In our present state of imperfection, the human heart is found to be capable of admitting, at the same time, passions both good and evil : and these, blending themselves together, produce those many inconsistencies which but too often mark the actions of the best of men. This being the case, we may still venture to maintain, that pride and vanity, those passions which but too

what Jamblichus has left us, concerning the signs and consequences of Enthusiasm, we should be struck with the coincidence. I cannot forbear remarking, however, that their inconsistent manner of writing affords a strong proof of their delusion. Thus sometimes they use, according to their own confession, a style " too Apostolical ;" at other times they treat the most sacred subjects with a coarseness and a levity, which cannot but be offensive to every one of true piety. Compare Mr. Whitefield's 1426th Letter with one which occurs in his Works, vol. iii. p. 430. The language, in which Mr. Whitefield used to speak of his officiating in the ministry, must in like manner be surely thought highly unbecoming. " Had our Captain " loitered, I should have lost the sale of some Gospel goods at " Gravesend market-place." *Lett.* 1438. " I love the open bracing " air : preaching within doors is apt to make us nervous." *Lett.* 1400. " A good pulpit-sweat to-day may give me refreshment." *Gillies' Life*, p. 271.

often

often are the humiliating attendants upon human excellence, were the principal causes which hurried the religious zeal of these Enthusiasts beyond its due bounds, and rendered it the occasion of infinite error and delusion. To assign to them motives of action, so little consonant with Christian perfection, is no very pleasing office. But with those convictions which an attentive observation of their conduct has impressed upon our minds, to draw any other conclusion would be the affectation rather than the exercise of Charity^m.

^m The following expressions, used by Mr. Whitefield when speaking of his future hopes, appear to be strongly tinged with spiritual pride. "It cannot be long ere the Chariots of Heaven (see 2 Kings ii. 11, 12.) will be sent for worthless me." *Lett.* 1007. "I am ambitious; I long to sit upon a throne." *Lett.* 1135. And again: "Surely of all the redeemed, I shall sing loudest in heaven." *Lett.* 1010. It is true, that in speaking of himself he often uses such terms as are expressive of the greatest self-abasement. Thus he generally calls himself "hell-deserving me—and the chief of sinners—less than the least of all Saints." But perhaps Pride is never more inveterate than when it assumes the appearance of Humility. I hope it will not be thought uncharitable to apply this observation to the following passages:—"Last Sunday I *creeped up to my Gospel Throne*: this evening the same honour is to be conferred upon me—Why me? Lord, why me?" *Whitefield's Lett.* 1399.—"I *submitted to be yet more vile*, and copied the example of our Lord in proclaiming the glad tidings of salvation, as he did, in the open air, having no place to contain

Perhaps however it may be said that the personal failings of these Enthusiasts ; that the confidence with which they asserted their title to spiritual pre-eminence ; and the eagerness with which they courted popularity, can no longer be an object of importance to the world. Certainly in themselves they cannot. It is a point however of the utmost importance to observe, that these very failings operated as the cause which led them to found a new Communion ; and which at the same time supplied them with the means of promoting its establishment. But yet further. If we examine into the tenets which they taught, and which they have imparted to their followers, we shall find them to be such as have a tendency to distract the public tranquillityⁿ, whenever they are permitted to operate, and to corrupt the purity of the faith. Surely these reasons are sufficient to shew that our enquiry cannot be considered

“ the multitudes that flocked together—.” *Coke's Life of Wesley*, p. 180.

ⁿ Mr. Whitefield asserts, “ Our cause, in my opinion, is “ the cause of *civil* and *religious* liberty ; and if death itself “ should be permitted to befall me for defending it, I hope, “ through Christ strengthening me, it would be gratefully received by me.” *Lett.* 1133. The violent manner, in which this opinion is maintained by part of the Sect, may be seen in Mr. Kilham's *Life* passim, and *Methodist Monitor*.

to be one, as some might be inclined to view it, of a nature merely personal °.

And this will be more evident, if we attend to the reasons why the Authors of this new Communion have not already sunk into that obscurity which has overwhelmed many other Enthusiasts, perhaps of equal piety,

° Though we do not mean to consider the Government which Mr. Wesley and Mr. Whitefield established in their separate Communions, we cannot forbear mentioning here one part of it, as it will serve to illustrate what has been advanced above. Mr. Whitefield drew up a method of confession for the women of his Societies: which is preserved *Gent. Magazine*, vol. ix. p. 238. Some of the questions which were to be proposed to them before they could be admitted into the Society, are as follows: “Are you in love?—Whom do you love?—Does any “court you?—Is there any one whom you suspect to have any “such design?—Is there any one who shews you more respect “than to other women?—Are you not pleased with that?— “How do you like him?—How do you feel yourself when “he comes, when he stays, when he goes away?—” The questions which were to be put to them at every meeting, after their admittance into the Society, were these: “What known “sin have you committed since our last meeting? What have “you said, thought, or done, of which you doubt whether it “may be sin?” Now, without insisting upon the extreme impropriety of these questions in themselves, be it asked, whether Mr. W. could have devised any plan which was better calculated to give him absolute authority over individuals, than this mode of confession? Surely we hardly need suggest, that it was by this very method, that the Emissaries of the Roman Church gained such an ascendancy over the consciences of their penitents, and were enabled to establish their enormous power.

and certainly of equal pretensions. Who now hears of the delusive fancies of the ancient Mystics; or who makes mention of those innumerable Prophets, who in every age, and in every kingdom, have severally claimed a divine commission, and have severally attempted to form their peculiar establishments? It is only in the page of history that even their names are now preserved ^p.

Nor ought this to excite astonishment. From the very nature of things we may expect, that no Enthusiastic Sect can subsist long, after that the first charm of novelty which recommended it is lost. If any do subsist, this is owing to a circumstance which merits our most serious regard. For we may observe that the converts to any new Sect, in order to give it perpetuity, never adhere strictly to the doctrines which its Founders, although they pretended to actual inspiration, originally taught. They rather silently substitute other doctrines; and by slow degrees model the whole system into

^p At the beginning of the last century, the Enthusiastic pretensions of the French Prophets were thought to be of sufficient importance to engage the attention of some of the writers of the first eminence — It is now near fifty years that the very existence of the Sect seems to have been almost forgotten.

a new and a more specious form. If there be any part of it which is manifestly extravagant, this they prudently suppress: if any of its tenets are found to be positively inconsistent with Scripture, to these they give an ambiguous interpretation: and if either its mode of worship or its form of ministry are of new invention, these they take pains to represent as having been the genuine, but long discontinued practices of the primitive Church. By such means as these it has happened that some Enthusiastic Communion have, in the course of a few years, been so entirely altered, that they in fact are constituted upon principles very different from those which their Founders themselves maintained^a. The danger of admitting such a

^a This cannot be illustrated more strongly than in the instance of Quakerism. It is probable that very few of those who belong to that Sect in the present day would have entered into it, had they heard the several blasphemous opinions, which were advanced and maintained by its first Enthusiastic Founders. It were to be wished therefore that the members of that communion would attentively consider the Writings and the Journals of Fox, and his immediate followers; and read what has been collected on this head by Bugg and Leslie. The unsoundness of the foundation upon which their Communion is built would then appear so evident, that many probably would feel the necessity of adopting the doctrines and re-entering the pale of the established Church.

practice

practice as this must even at first sight be manifest. For what heresy is there, which, however flagrant in itself, may not by these means be softened down until it shall appear to the incautious to be consistent with Scripture? or what Communion is there, however schismatical in its origin or in its principles, which having gone through these several modifications may not be believed, by the ignorant and inconsiderate, to be the same with an Apostolic Church?

These remarks are here urged in order to obviate an objection, which perhaps might otherwise have been made to the manner, in which our enquiry has been conducted. It might have been said, for instance, that we are exploding obsolete pretensions; that no one now admits the divine mission of the Founders of the Sect; that the cause in no shape rests upon those claims for sanction; and that the Communion ought to be considered with regard to those principles only on which it actually stands at the present day.

Now, were we to admit that these observations were just, still it would be obvious, when we recall our minds to the point which we proposed to consider, that they could neither affect the method which we have pursued,

purfued, nor invalidate the conclufions which we fhall hereafter make. Our general pofition was, that the claims of the Enthufiaft, however ftrong his conviction of their truth may be, can at all times be proved to be fo ill-founded, as that they never juftify him in making Schifms in the Church. All therefore that we have to do, as far at leaft as concerns our argument, is to prove that the Authors of any Sect were Enthufiafts. That their conduct is finful, then follows as a confequence. It matters not in what light thofe Enthufiafts may be afterwards confidered by fome of their followers. It is the principle which induced them firft to eftablifh a new Communion, which alone is to be made the the object of confideration. Certainly the claims of Montanus are obfolete: and every one confeffes that his belief in immediate illuminations was the effect of mere Enthufiaftic delufion. Yet had we illuftrated the truth of our general pofition by an examination of his pretenfions in particular, no one could have properly objected, on thofe grounds, that our enquiry was incomplete. And fhould that Sect be ever revived, it muft be allowed that the moft obvious method to convince thofe who fhould adopt it of the finfulnefs of their conduct, would be to expofe the
Enthu-

Enthusiasm of him from whom the system which they have embraced, originated.

This then is the mode of enquiry, which in every instance perhaps it would be expedient to adopt. But in the present, we may doubt whether there is any other method by which any positive conclusion could have been obtained. For though it be true, that the Sect which was founded by the Enthusiasts in question assume one general name; it is nevertheless true, that it is made up of several distinct Communions, each of which interprets Scripture and worships God in the way which *seemeth good in their own sight*. What single argument is there therefore, which applying to one can apply equally to all, unless it be the reference to that one source from which they all originally proceeded? If they disclaim one common original, they then must have their principles of separation peculiar to themselves. Let these be avowed, and they will at all times be impartially considered. Until this be done, we are to suppose that they justify their conduct by the authority of those persons, whom they call their venerable Fathers in the Gospel.

But perhaps it will be argued, that this mode of reasoning can apply to one part only of the present question. It may be said,
for

for instance, that it may affect the validity of that external form of government, which the members of this Sect have received in common from its Founders^r: but that it can in no shape affect the Doctrines which they hold. For it has been maintained among them, that their Doctrines are to be judged of, not by what was originally taught, but by what has been since professed.

To this argument we reply in the first place, that the members of this new Communion are not yet agreed among themselves

^r This concession probably will not be made by some of Mr. Wesley's followers; for one of his Biographers asserts, that "whatever degree of power Mr. W. enjoyed, he received it in the *order of God*, and consequently it was his bounden duty to be faithful to it;" which was in strict conformity to Mr. W.'s own declaration; "I accepted my power *merely in obedience* to the Providence of God, and for the good of the people." *Coke's Life*, p. 535. If these assertions be true, then Mr. W. had as much authority to form a Church as St. Paul, and we are as much bound to respect the institutions of the one as those of the other. It is to be remembered however, that the greater part of the Sect reprobated and still continued to reprobate Mr. Wesley's assumption of power to ordain Ministers; he was told, that it "stained, as it were, with blood, every action of his whole life—" and it was declared, "that the person, who advised the measure, would be proved to have been a felon to Methodism, and to have stuck fast an assassinating knife into the vitals of its body." *Whitehead's Life*, &c. vol. ii. p. 403, 419. Dr. Coke's Letter, who urged Mr. W. to ordain him Bishop, is to be found *ibid.* p. 415.

what

what is to be the standard of their faith. And secondly, that if this standard were to be established to-day, we could not be secure, according to the principle advanced, that to-morrow some other teacher might not arise among them, who, when it was conceived that their whole system was finally arranged, would give it a different and more specious colouring.

O ! how disingenuous do men become, when they are once attached to their own imaginations ! Let it be asked, whether it is possible to fix on a more conclusive proof of error and delusion, than to discover that the opinions of a religious teacher, affirming himself to have been taught of God, are not to be admitted by his followers as a rule of faith, until they themselves have modified them ? We may expect that every system which is formed by human reason, or that every reformation which is conducted by human prudence, will be imperfect at its first appearance. But it is the distinctive characteristic of such doctrines as are truly revealed to us by the Almighty, that they are perfect at the very time of their delivery. So that we cannot have perhaps a more infallible test, whereby to ascertain what doctrines are of man, than the very circumstance of their admitting gradual improvement.

But,

But, be it asked, do we require for the doctrines which have been taught us by the Author of our Faith, and by his Apostles, that privilege which the present Sectaries would require for theirs? Certainly not. We contend, that our faith is to be judged of by ascertaining what doctrines were taught by those who first preached it; not by referring to any interpretation which succeeding teachers, after that the Church had been rent by divisions, thought proper to give those doctrines. Were we to allow that the standard of our faith could not be properly estimated till the second or third century, the diversity of opinions, which by that time were propagated, would tend so firmly to establish the empire of scepticism, that I doubt not but that every sacred tie which binds us to Christianity might be dissolved; that there would be no unsound doctrine which might not thus be sanctioned; and that ultimately we should be left to wander from conjecture to conjecture, until every certain principle of faith were lost.

Impressed therefore, not merely with the propriety, but with the necessity of arguing as we have done, let us now turn to consider what has been advanced on the one hand, and what has been proved on the other.

We

We began by shewing, that the charge of separation from the Established Church, which was alledged against the Authors of this new Communion, was not a vague and an ill-founded accusation ; but that it was one, which could be proved against them by the evidence of such facts as had been previously judged to be sufficient to constitute, in every case, the offence of Schism ^s.

Enquiring into the immediate cause which led them thus to violate the sacredness of Church Unity, we found it to have been the persuasion which they entertained, that they were called upon to act as they did, by the immediate will of the Almighty ^t. Knowing, however, that the truth of all extraordinary commissions is attested by the evidence of supernatural works, we then demanded what of this nature they could offer, to convince us, that their belief in a divine commission was not the result of enthusiastic delusion. Such attestations of miraculous works as they adduced in evidence of their pretensions, were impartially considered ; and we found that these, so far from having been supernatural works, were in reality nothing more than ordinary occurrences, which they could not

^s See p. 94, 5, 6, 7.

^t See p. 204 to 215.

have mistaken for miracles, had they not been under the influence of Enthusiasm ^u.

To ascertain whether this conclusion was just, we next enquired, whether the doctrines which they delivered possessed those internal evidences of truth which must characterise all such doctrines as really are communicated by divine revelations. But we found that in this point the deficiency was even more remarkable than in the former ^x. For though the Founders of the Sect asserted, that they were filled in a peculiar manner with the Holy Ghost; and that they had been instructed of God, what they were to teach mankind; they nevertheless contradicted, not only themselves, and one another, but even the very Scriptures. All these circumstances being combined, what could we do less than conclude that they were, in the strict meaning of the word, Enthusiasts?

Having proceeded thus far, it then remained for us to enquire what was the natural cause, to which their delusion might be attributed. And having examined their conduct, in strict reference to those principles which had been before established concerning

^u See p. 224. to 240.

^x See p. 240. to 250.

the nature of Enthusiasm^y, we were led to conclude, that their delusion must have originated in the early indulgence of a proud and ambitious spirit, which induced them first to think that they were sent into the world to answer some purpose of more than common importance ; and which afterwards led them to believe, that the Almighty had chosen them to be extraordinary instruments, for the purification and the enlargement of the Church of Christ.

Such being the result of the whole enquiry, the inference which we are now to draw is an obvious one.

If the Authors of this new Sect, in founding their Communion, acted upon no authority ; or, what is more immediately to the point, upon the full persuasion that divine authority was communicated to them, when in fact no such authority had been communicated ; we cannot, consistently with any principle of reason, admit them to be our teachers in points of religious faith ; even though in so doing we were not to abandon other teachers, who should have an unexceptionable claim to our attention.

But yet further. Having once ascertained

^y See p. 36. to 54.

that these Sectaries, instead of being divinely commissioned Teachers, were Enthusiasts, actuated by the unworthy motives of spiritual pride and ambition^z; if after this we were to entrust the keeping of our souls to a new Ministry, of their appointment; if we

^z Ambition, and the love of absolute power in governing, seems to have been a motive which operated much more strongly with Mr. Wesley, than with Mr. Whitefield. It is in reference therefore to him particularly, that the following observation, I presume, was made. "Since the institution of the Jesuits, we cannot meet with an instance of such a vast body (as that of the Methodists) managed with so much dexterity, and yielding so complete obedience to the *will of one man*." See *A Review of the Policy, Doctrines, and Morals of the Methodists*, p. 2. To prove that this is not an exaggerated assertion, see Whitehead's *Life of Wesley*, vol. ii. p. 474. where he shews in what manner Mr. Wesley, by exercising his *power, which was absolute*, could, "like a mighty torrent, gathering strength in its progress," influence the opinions of between *four and five hundred thousand people*, on any "important matter, which might either concern the Societies, or the Nation at large." The nature of Mr. Whitefield's ambition seems to be accurately described by himself in the following letter. "I cannot think matters are quite ripe for settling a church; but do as God shall direct, I am easy—I find you are for settling—I have *no freedom*, but in going about to all denominations. God lets me see more and more that *I must evangelize*. I cannot join with any one so as to be *fixed to any one particular place*. Every one has his proper gift. *Field-preaching* is my plan; in this I am carried as on eagles' wings. God makes way for me every where." *Works*, vol. i. p. 277.

were to separate from an Apostolical Church, and enter into a fold, built and framed according to the vain inventions of their deluded imaginations, and not according to the will and the commands of God, our conduct would be more than irrational ; it would be highly criminal.

For if we were to place the question upon the lowest ground ; if we were to view it merely as a point of moral propriety, even the faint light of natural religion would discover to us, that every action which is done in wilful opposition to the convictions of reason, cannot but be sinful. But when we reflect, that our reason is enlightened by a peculiar and a sacred principle ; when we connect, as connect we must, all the knowledge which we acquire on religious subjects, with that divine assistance which is communicated to us, in order to supply our natural insufficiencies ; when we remember likewise, that if we are enabled to apprehend the Truth, and to form just conceptions concerning the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, this is owing to the illuminations of the Holy Ghost ; it will be difficult at all times to separate between a wilful opposition to the convictions of our reason, in matters of religion, and an
oppo-

opposition to Him, by whom that reason has been enlightened ^a. Of the gradations of sin in this, as in every other case, He alone is to judge, to whom judgment is committed. The principle on which the offence is founded, and the probable consequence of that offence, are the only points with which we are concerned.

The illustration of a particular instance, perhaps, may serve to explain the purport of our argument.

Let us suppose that any one, who was perfectly acquainted with the evidence which establishes the truth of Christianity, were to resolve on embracing the Mahometan Religion. In order to make him change this design, waving every other consideration, whether of shame, or prudence, or natural affection,

^a If this reasoning be just, it will follow, that wilful Apostasy, and wilful profession of Infidelity, are sins which ought to be referred to that blasphemy, or sin against the Holy Ghost, which our Blessed Lord speaks of as an offence which can never be forgiven. Some indeed have supposed that this offence was one so entirely of a personal nature, that it could only have been committed by those who actually beheld the miracles performed by our Saviour. But if we consider Heb. vi. 4, 5, 6. and observe what Grotius and Hammond have said in their notes upon those verses, we shall probably be induced to think, that the sin against the Holy Ghost may be incurred by those who at any period, under the circumstances above mentioned, deny, or oppose the Christian Faith. See also the same Commentators in Matth. xii. 32.

we probably should appeal solely to his understanding; and we should ask him, whether he could reconcile it to himself on any grounds of reason, to embrace a faith, the pretensions of which were supported by no one character or evidence of truth. We should first of all remind him, that Mahomet, having asserted that he was sent by the Almighty with a divine commission to teach mankind, had never wrought any work to prove that this assertion was well founded. We should next bid him consider, that one of the tests of divine revelations is, that they should be, in every minutest particular, consistent with themselves; and then we should shew him that the revelations to which Mahomet pretended, were various, and contradictory, and perpetually changing, as the circumstances changed which called them forth. And finally, as it follows, of absolute necessity, that all doctrines coming from God must be consistent with such truths as he hath at any time previous been pleased to reveal, we should then prove to him, that the doctrines which he was going to embrace were altogether repugnant to those religious truths, which have been confessedly imparted to us by divine inspiration.

Such are the arguments which on this occasion

casion we should employ to divert him from his purpose. And should it happen, that, allowing them to be just and unexceptionable, he were nevertheless to persist in his first intention ; we then could not scruple to say, that the sinfulness of his conduct would consist in this : That he had rejected a religion, the truth of which was established by every evidence which the nature of the case required ; and that he had embraced another religion, the pretensions of which, his reason told him, were supported by no one mark or character of authenticity.

If then this conclusion, as applied to that case, would be allowed to be just, we now have only to change the terms of the proposition, and it will be found to apply to the question, which is the immediate object of our enquiry. We are carefully to distinguish indeed between the different degrees of sinfulness in the two cases ; but this distinction being made, there seems no reason why we should not allow that the principle, which constitutes the offence, must be in both the same. For though we willingly admit that there is a wide interval between Apostasy and Schism ; we nevertheless cannot but argue, that should any one quit a Communion which is founded upon such authority, as shall justly entitle it to the

name of an Apostolical Church, to enter into a new Communion, which is founded upon no authority, but such as shall have been proved to be altogether delusive; the question then cannot but recur, whether his guilt (however different in degree) be not in kind the same with that of him, who deserts the Christian Faith to embrace a religion, the evidences of which are proved to him to be, in like manner, delusory.

But here it may probably be suggested, that the above reflections can be of force with those only, who, having admitted the justice of all our preceding conclusions, shall acknowledge that the Founders of this new Sect were Enthusiasts, in that sense of the word which we would assign to it. The observation is just. May we not be permitted however to remark, that the manner, in which these Teachers are defended by their followers themselves, is such as appears to confirm the propriety of that conclusion on which we insist ^b.

^b It is remarkable, that the respective Biographers both of Mr. Wesley and Mr. Whitefield, in detailing their actions, and in summing up their characters, scruple not to confess that they were guilty of such contradictions, and that they were influenced by such passions, as sufficiently prove, that they could not have acted under that divine commission which they claimed, and which alone could have justified their conduct. The inconsistency of the following passage is very striking. "It would
" be

For example. It is sometimes said that we ought not to understand in a strict and literal sense those expressions which the Authors of this Communion made use of, when speaking of their divine commission. Now let it be asked, whether this be not an acknowledgement that a greater degree of authority had been claimed by them, than they were justified in claiming? Why else should it be supposed that their assertions on this head

“ be unjust to Mr. Whitefield’s memory not to notice that uniformity of sentiment which runs through all his sermons and writings, after he was thoroughly enlightened in the truth. “ Indeed, when he first set out in the ministry, his youth and “ inexperience led him into many expressions, which were contrary to sound doctrine, and which made many of the sermons “ he first printed, justly exceptionable.” *Gillies’ Life*, &c. p. 290. Yet it was at that very period of his life that Mr. W. was acknowledged as a Prophet, an Apostle, and an Angel of God : it was then that he himself declares, that “ the Holy Spirit “ taught him the knowledge of divine things in the minutest “ circumstances ;” and some of the very sermons and writings which his Biographer condemns, are those which he assures us God enabled him to compose, and directed him to publish. Such, for instance, was the sermon on the Marriage at Cana ; in which he several times asserts his own divine mission. “ It was grace that moved the Son to come down, and “ die : it was grace that moved the Holy Ghost to undertake to “ sanctify the elect people of God : it was grace, free grace, “ that moved our Lord Jesus Christ, *to send forth his ministers*, to “ call poor sinners *this day* ; let *me* not, then, my brethren, go “ without *my errand*.” *Works*, vol. vi. p. 77. See also Fifth Journal, p. 16, 23.

were

were not to be understood, like those of the Apostles and Prophets, in their plain and obvious meaning?

At other times it is granted, that the language used by them was both hasty and inconsiderate; but it is urged, that whatever their words might have been, it never was their intention to arrogate to themselves the sacred pre-eminence of the Apostolic character. How can this suggestion be admitted, when we find that they publicly asserted, that they were called to “take upon themselves the Administration of the Church^c,” which is exclusively the peculiar function of the Apostolic office?

And finally, it is sometimes argued, that we ought not to examine their several claims too minutely; that it was a venial fault, if a glowing piety, and a warm imagination, did hurry them sometimes beyond the bounds of prudence, and induce them to advance higher pretensions than could in strictness be justified. All this we readily grant. It is indeed all that we contend for. And as this recurrence to the plea of extenuation necessarily involves a consciousness of the existence of delusion; as, in fact, it amounts to a confession, that the pretensions to a divine commission, which were advanced by the Authors of their Com-

^c See page 212.

munion were enthusiastic, how can they themselves avoid forming the very inference, on which we would insist? The obvious dictates of reason must have convinced them, that, in all cases, it is neither prudent or religious to act on such claims as are confessedly ill founded. How much less so then, in those which concern their own salvation, and that of others! Once more therefore we repeat, that the high rank which they occupy in creation, as rational beings; and the glorious privilege which they have obtained under the Christian Covenant, of being led and enlightened by the Holy Spirit of God, should make them above all things dread the idea of acting, in points of such awful importance as the present, in opposition to the sacredness of a well-founded conviction.

Thus much then will be sufficient to shew upon what grounds we venture to hope, that our conclusions may be suffered to have weight with the serious, and the dispassionate. A few words only will be necessary to mark the manner in which those conclusions ought to be applied.

Though it be true that we have made the enthusiastic delusion of two individuals the immediate object of our enquiry; yet we have more than once explained, that it never was
intended

intended that the enquiry itself should be one of mere personal application. Whatever points therefore shall be judged to have been established, these should be considered as general principles, applicable to the claims of every Enthusiast, and not to theirs only whose conduct has been made the immediate subject of our consideration.

As for them, they have both entered on that awful state, in which they cannot be affected either by the praises, or the censures, which they may receive from man. We confess indeed, that in their conduct they seem to have been guilty of many errors. Let not this circumstance, however, lead us to depreciate their characters more than is just. For while we consider their imperfections, it should not be forgotten, that the very nature of our enquiry has been such as excluded, to a certain degree, the contemplation of their virtues. This therefore must serve to repress in our minds every improper sentiment of triumph, and of exultation. And should we feel, what it will more become us to feel, *great sorrow and heaviness of heart*^c, to think that men, so distinguished for personal piety as they were, should have suffered themselves to have been so fatally misled by the influence of carnal pas-

^c Rom. ix. 2.

sions, as to become the authors of contentions and schisms in the Church of Christ; be it our consolation to reflect, that God seeth not as man seeth. From him no motive, or principle of action, can ever be concealed. And as he is full of loving-kindness and of mercy, we will hope that he knoweth many things which will be permitted to extenuate their failings^d.

With respect to the Sect itself, of which they were the Authors, we cannot but believe that the time will come, when, from *an overflowing river of many waters*, it will be

^d The sincerity with which both Mr. Wesley, and Mr. Whitefield believed in the reality of their commission was such, that we can hardly doubt of their having died with that composure which naturally would result from the conviction, that by acting as they had done they had fulfilled the will of God. The language however, which their Biographers employ on this occasion, seems to be in no shape justifiable. Thus it is asserted of Mr. Whitefield, that the day before his death, "he had such clear views of the blessedness of open vision, and the complete fruition of God in Christ, that his *countenance was made to shine*, like the unclouded sun." *Gillies' Life*, &c. p. 301. Of Mr. Wesley it was asserted, that "his exit resembled an Apotheosis, rather than a dissolution." *Whitehead's Life*, &c. vol. ii. p. 482. The impropriety of this latter expression is such as must be obvious to every one. The former seems to be a most unbecoming reference to Luke ix. 29. where it is said, that the countenance of the Holy Jesus shone, when he was transfigured on the Mount.

reduced to a small stream; and that finally it shall *be forgotten of the foot*, and entirely *wasted and dried up*. For however we may be grieved at witnessing the number of its Profelytes, yet we have sufficient ground to argue, that neither from this Schism, nor from any that may hereafter succeed to it, has the true Apostolical Church any lasting cause of apprehension.

We learn from history, that there never was a period in which there were not Heresies and Schisms, to afflict and to distract the Church. We learn, moreover, that of these there were some which raged, not only for a few years, but even for several centuries, sometimes bidding defiance to the state, and contending for their opinions at the head of numerous armies^e; and sometimes, what might have seemed more likely to give them permanency, supported by the authority of the ruling

^e There cannot be a stronger instance of this, than in the history of the Sect of the Donatists. Its rise may be dated in the year 317; and it was not till after the sixth century, that it became extinct. But in the interval, its followers were so numerous, and their strength so formidable, that the Emperor, Constans, was obliged to send an army against them. It was not till they were defeated by Macarius, at the battle of Bagnia, that their power declined. See Metheim's Eccl. Hist. Cent. IV. part ii. ch. 5. and Cent. VI. part ii. ch. 5.

powers. Yet as these have long since been extinct, we will not doubt but that this Sect, which is now permitted to disturb the harmony of our Communion, shall, in like manner, when so it seems good to our Almighty Master, *be chased as the chaff of the mountains before the wind, and like a rolling thing before the whirlwind*^s.

Whether even then a lasting tranquillity will be restored to our Church, must ever remain a matter of uncertainty. It may be feared, that the levity of the human heart, eager alike to suggest and to embrace innovations, will again raise up new Enthusiasts, who again will lay claim to particular communications, and Apostolical commissions.

Should this be the case, then probably the Infidel, and those who are of a light and of an irreverent temper, will derive from that circumstance an argument to discredit, as they think, religion altogether. They will take occasion from it to sneer, as many now are inclined to do, at a piety which may be so easily perverted; and they will confirm themselves in evil, because they find, that the love of virtue has not always preserved men from delusion.

^s Isaiah xvii. 13.

But the sincere believer will draw from a contemplation of the present, and of every similar occurrence, reflections which will produce a far different effect upon his heart. Satisfied that the written word of God is the only source from which religious knowledge is to be derived, he will consider it to be sufficient in all things to make *the man of God perfect*^h; and he will neither allow himself to expect nor to wish for any extraordinary communications.

Impressed with this sentiment, and being conscious how difficult it is to draw the precise line between visionary excellence and attainable goodness, he will not suffer himself to rely too much even upon the rectitude of his intentions; he will submit in all things to *walk humbly with God*; endeavouring to please him *by obedience, more than by sacrifice*; by modestly performing the duties which have been *required at his hands*, and not by adding to them services of his own invention.

Thus regulating his affections, and thus forming his conduct, he will neither give occasion, *by following pernicious ways, that the way of truth shall be evil spoken of*ⁱ by others, nor fall himself into reproach and the snare of

^h 2 Tim. iii. 17.

ⁱ 2 Pet. ii. 2.

the devil^k. But being strong in faith, and setting his affections on a future state of glorified existence, he patiently will wait for that blessed hour, when adoration need not be bounded, and praise may be eternal; when divine love shall rest secure from wandering into error; when neither zeal shall degenerate into Enthusiasm, nor spiritual humility into pride; when, ultimately, the perfection of our natures will exclude temptation, and the beatific vision of God shall leave us nothing to desire.

^k 1 Tim. iii. 7.

SERMON VI.

JAMES iii. 5.

BEHOLD, HOW GREAT A MATTER A LITTLE
FIRE KINDLETH !

WHEN we entered upon this present enquiry, there were two distinct questions, which we proposed severally to consider. The one, whether there be not certain rules, by which the pretensions of the Religious Enthusiast may be proved, in every instance, to be unfounded : the other, whether his delusion, if permitted to operate, will not be highly injurious to the cause of Christianity. The former of these points has been considered at length in the three last preceding Lectures : it now remains for us to turn our attention to the latter.

And great is the attention which this part of our subject demands. If indeed the influence of Enthusiasm extended no further than to produce delusion in those who are

immediately obnoxious to its power, then, as the number of these will always be, comparatively speaking, small, it might become a question, how far it would be prudent, by a public examination of their pretensions, to give them public importance. Or again, if it could be ascertained that the delusion when thus excited would affect us in points of mere speculative opinion only, then it might equally be a doubt what general good could result from the investigation. But as neither of these suppositions is just; as it may be proved that Religious Enthusiasm, when once it is permitted to operate, must have an extensive influence; and again, as it may be shewn that this influence will affect us materially, as members both of a Christian Church, and of a Civil Community, the question is to be regarded as one, not of mere speculative curiosity, but of the highest practical importance.

I am conscious indeed that there are some, who not being accustomed to view the Christian doctrines in their proper light, as revealed truths from which it is impossible to deviate without incurring guilt, will consider it to be a matter of small importance whether that Unity of Faith, for which we so earnestly contend, be in every instance preserved,

served, or not. There are also others, who being indifferent to all forms of Church Government alike, will esteem it to be a point of no consequence what Communion is formed, or what Ministries are erected, so long as the general truths of Christianity are taught. Persons of either of these descriptions perceive nothing in the irregularities which result from Enthusiasm than can excite their apprehension. They rather assert, that such irregularities may tend even to promote, in some degree, the cause of religion. They say, that much individual good will result from the diffusion of religious knowledge, even though the means employed for its diffusion be not, strictly speaking, justifiable : and they insist, that so long as men are made more serious, no injury can be done either to Civil Government, or to Religion.

But though these positions have never wanted either followers or advocates, we must nevertheless maintain, that they are equally dangerous and delusive.

That good may be done to mankind by every possible means, is the prayer of all pious Christians. That the over-ruling providence of God directs all things for the welfare of his creatures is likewise their firm belief. The hope however of obtaining a possible

good will never justify the adoption of forbidden means. Thus in the present case, should we even believe that some advantages might result from the irregular, but zealous efforts of the Enthusiastic Sectary, we should remember, that the nature of law is such, its commands are so sacred, and its restraints so salutary, that the violation of it can never be compensated by the contingency of a partial benefit. Say that in some one point something may have been gained, it will be found that in many others, much will have been lost.

Sensible of the importance of this truth, we now proceed to shew in what manner Religious Enthusiasm injures the cause of Christianity, in the effects which it will unavoidably produce on Ecclesiastical, and on Civil Establishments. On the former, by corrupting the purity of that Faith which was given us as the mean whereby we may attain to future glory: on the latter, by weakening the bond of Civil Union, and by exciting at the same time the deadliest animosities.

These then are the two points which remain to be considered. We will confine ourselves in this Lecture to the examination of the former of them; and we will endeavour to shew, that Religious Enthusiasm

fiasm tends to corrupt the purity of the Christian Faith.

And here it is evident that our enquiry will naturally assume a twofold direction. We shall be led first to consider, what are the unsound opinions which Enthusiasm is likely to suggest, without any reference to Schism. And secondly, in what manner the Schisms which the Spirit of Enthusiasm shall have created, will operate afterwards, both to confirm the erroneous doctrines which have been already disseminated, and to give birth to others.

On the former of these points we shall not dwell long. It is towards the latter principally that we propose to turn our attention. For not only is the investigation of that point more immediately connected with our general design; but we hope that the conclusions to which it will lead, may be such as shall open the eyes of the Enthusiast to the sinfulness of his conduct. So long as he believes that the Schism which he creates will affect only a limited number of individuals, he may blind himself, to a certain degree, as to the guilt which he incurs by giving way to his delusion. But when it shall be shewn to him that the principle of action which he has adopted, being once admitted, cannot be

restricted in its operation to any one given consequence : when it shall be shewn to him also, that the Communion which he establishes will lead to other divisions ; that the erroneous opinions which he advances will serve to introduce other, and perhaps still more dangerous heresies ; and that long after his name shall have become extinct, the influence of his conduct will be felt in that contempt of Church Unity, and that love of novelty which his example will authorise ; he probably may desist from an undertaking, the fatal consequences of which no human foresight can fully estimate.

How repeatedly do the Scriptures caution us on this head ! If the Apostle call upon us in the text to consider, that a little fire is sufficient to kindle a flame which will spread until it have consumed all before it : if our Blessed Lord have warned us, that any evil principle, whether of faith or of practice, which shall once be permitted to govern us as single individuals, will spread its contagion by degrees to others, until even *the whole lump be leavened*^a ; it becomes a point of the strictest duty that we weigh well every probable consequence of our actions. For, after so many cautions,

^a See 1 Cor. v. 6. Galat. v. 9. and Mark viii. 15. Luke xii. 1.

should

should we still offend in this particular, who can say to how great an extent we may not be made justly responsible for all those evils, however remote, which our example shall have occasioned?

With this impression on our minds, let us now turn to the examination of the points which we have undertaken to consider. And First we will endeavour to ascertain, whether the suggestions of Enthusiasm be not such as tend of themselves unavoidably to corrupt, even though unconnected with Schism, the purity of the Faith.

To establish this we will observe, that

I. One of the persuasions which Enthusiasts entertain is; That the strong impulses of feeling may be made the rule, and the principle of their actions. Great is the injury which will be done to Religion in consequence of this conceit. For if men believe that the Almighty communicates his will to them by impressing forcibly upon their hearts what, in every situation, he would have them do, they must naturally suspect that every strong impulse, or inclination which they feel, may be a divine suggestion. But then having no sure criterion^b, whereby they may ascer-

^b It is remarkable, that although Enthusiasts declare confidently that they receive divine intimations, commands, promises,

tain the real nature of the impressions which are made upon them, they will be at all times liable to mistake the carnal suggestions of their own hearts for the holy voice of God's commandment^c. In consequence of

mises, &c. the truth of this rests upon their bare assertion; for they never assign a reason why they believe that these commands, &c. come really from God. So Fox, the Founder of the Sect of Quakers, tells us, that as he was walking in the field, the Lord opened to him some truth, which, he says, he "strangled at; but," he adds, "I saw it clearly, as the Lord had opened it to me, and was satisfied, and admired the goodness of the Lord, who had opened this thing unto me." *Leslie's Works*, vol. ii. p. 152. So Mr. Wesley; "It was revealed to me, that nothing grieved Satan so much as the private Societies." *Bp. Lavington*, Vol. I. part i. p. 65. Thus Mr. Whitefield; "I assuredly felt—I knew it was Jesus Christ that revealed himself unto my soul. I told the people God called me, and I must away." *Bp. Lavington* ut supra. In another place he is more minute. "When the bell rang to call us to attend lectures in our College Hall, I went to open the door to go down stairs, but feeling something give me a violent inward check, I entered my study.—The next week Satan served me in like manner again: but perceiving no inward check, I went into the Hall." He refused however to perform the exercise which was required of him; and being asked why he did so, he said it was because he "had a new Revelation." *Early Dealings*, &c. p. 24, 5.

^c Thus in Mr. Wesley's Second Journal, p. 142. a person describes his call in the following words: "Doubting what I ought to do, I went into a neighbouring wood, and going into a little cave, fell on my face, and prayed, 'Lord, if it be thy will that I should leave my wife and children, I am ready: only shew me thy will.' Immediately I heard a loud voice, saying, 'Go on, Go on.' I rose joyful and satisfied; " went

which, adhering no longer to the positive law of prescribed duty, they will introduce such an uncertainty with regard to the proper objects of religious belief, and such a fluctuation as to the mode of religious worship, as will of necessity corrupt, and, were it possible, might ultimately even destroy the pure standard of Revealed Truth.

II. Another immediate suggestion of Enthusiasm is; That the illumination of the Holy Ghost will guide men into all truth : whence is drawn this fatal conclusion, that such as are truly religious will be so taught of God, as to need no human instruction ^d.

“ went home, and told my wife, that it was God’s will that I
 “ should now leave her. I went out of the door, and in that
 “ moment was filled with peace, joy, and comfort.” The call
 of J. Naylor, the blaspheming Prophet of the Quakers, is similar. “ I was at the plough, meditating on the things of God,
 “ and suddenly I heard a voice, saying unto me, ‘ Get thee out
 “ from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house.” See his Trial
 for Blasphemy, in asserting himself to be Jesus Christ.

^d Some of the tenets, which were maintained by the Enthusiasts in the time of the great Rebellion, were, “ There is no
 “ need of human learning, nor of reading authors, for Preachers;
 “ but all books and learning must go down ; it comes from
 “ the great want of the Spirit, that men write such great volumes,
 “ and make such a-do of learning.” *Foxes and Firebrands*, &c. Part ii. p. 222. And again ; “ Parents are not to
 “ catechise their little children, nor to set them to read the
 “ Scrip-

Now the unavoidable tendency of this opinion is to destroy all mental improvement, by depriving human learning of its great and ultimate object, the application of acquired knowledge to the study of revealed truth. And should human learning ever become so far depreciated as to fall into general neglect, we may venture to affirm, that some gross perversion of Gospel Truth will be the inevitable consequence^c. For what was it that made men receive, as the genuine Truths of Christianity, those tremendously corrupt

"Scripture, or to teach them to pray, but must let them alone for God to teach them." *Ibid.* p. 228.

^c Some of the Schismatics of the present day are very zealous in decrying human learning. See a re-publication of a Sermon which was circulated among the Schismatics, at the time of the Rebellion, on the "*Sufficiency of the Spirit's teaching without human learning.*" Nothing can well be imagined more fanatical than the conduct of a Methodist Preacher in America, "who issued a proclamation to bring to him such books as he thought fit to prohibit, and, among the rest, the Whole Duty of Man, and Ep. Beveridge's Private Thoughts on Religion. This was accordingly done; and a vast heap of them was on a Sunday evening committed to the flames, the miserably deluded people singing Hallelujah; and declaring, that the smoke of the torments of such of the authors of all those books, as died in the same belief as when they wrote them, was now ascending in hell, in like manner as they saw the smoke of those books rise." *History of Modern Enthusiasm*, p. 114.

doctrines

doctrines which, during the dark ages, were taught and upheld by the Church of Rome? What, but that gradual extinction of human learning, which while it prevented the improvement, of necessity produced the debasement of the human understanding? And were we to suppose that the same, or that similar corruptions could ever be again universally received, this would be owing to the return of that general ignorance, which would deprive mankind both of the means, and of the ability of detecting error!

III. Enthusiasm leads men sometimes to misconstrue the meaning of the Holy Scriptures; sometimes to dispute their authority; and often to supersede them^s.

^f It is well known that when Amrou took Alexandria, the Caliph Omar ordered him to destroy its famous library, saying; "If the books which it contains agree with the Coran, they are useless, and need not be preserved: if they disagree, they are pernicious, and ought to be destroyed." *Ockley's History of the Saracens*, vol. i. p. 313. This speech has been frequently cited as a proof of fanaticism. But the abilities of Omar make it probable that it was dictated by a deep and refined policy. For what means could have been devised more likely to promote the propagation of the Mahometan Religion, than the extinction of that learning by which Christianity would have been defended?

^g A common Soldier, in the time of the Rebellion, preaching to the people, said, "that he had received a command from God in a vision, which he was to deliver to them, and which
" they

And this must be evident, when we consider what will be the effect produced by a belief that God imparts the knowledge of divine things, by immediate communications. When an Enthusiast has persuaded himself that he is instructed by particular illumination, should he find that the opinions which he fancies he has received thus immediately from God, contradict the express declarations of Scripture, rather than relinquish those opinions, he will not hesitate even to make void the written word, by saying, that he possesses within himself a far clearer and more perfect

“ they were to obey, under pain of damnation. It consisted of
 “ five lights, which were to be abolished. 1. The Sabbath;
 “ as unnecessary, Jewish, and ceremonial. 2. Tithes; as a
 “ great burthen to the Saints of God, and a discouragement of
 “ industry and tillage. 3. Ministers; as Anti-christian, and
 “ of no further use, now that Christ himself descends into the
 “ hearts of his Saints, and his Spirit enlightens them with re-
 “ velations and inspirations. 4. Magistrates; as useless, since
 “ Christ himself is in the purity of the Spirit come among us,
 “ and has erected the kingdom of the Saints upon earth.”
 After this he pulled out a Bible, and holding it up to the people, went on with the following blasphemy: 5. “ Here is a
 “ book you have in great veneration, consisting of two
 “ parts, the Old and New Testament. I must tell you it is
 “ abolished; it contains beggarly rudiments; milk for babes.
 “ But now Christ is in glory among us, and imparts a fuller
 “ measure of his Spirit to his Saints than this can afford, I
 “ am commanded to burn it before your faces.” See *Collier's Eccl. Hist.* vol. ii. p. 861.

know-

knowledge of the divine will, than prior revelations, given in times of remote antiquity, can pretend to convey ^h.

IV. It is owing to Enthusiasm, that the great doctrines of Christianity are frequently treated of in such a manner, as leads many to form erroneous notions concerning the doctrines themselves.

For we are to remember, that Enthusiasm being produced by the action of the imagination, not only the character of the Enthu-

^h The manner in which the Enthusiastic Founders and Prophets of Quakerism denied the authority of the Scriptures, may be seen at length in Leslie's *Snake in the Grass*, Sect. 7. Fox declares it to be blasphemy to say the Holy Scriptures are the word of God: yet he, and another of the Teachers, commands their own Epistles to be read in their meetings, "as the word of the Lord, and in the life and authority of God, from whom they came." The principle on which they supported their rejection of the Scriptures was, "What was a command of God in old time, is not so to us, unless required by the same spirit anew." In conformity to which principle, a person was formally accused, and censured at one of their meetings, for having said, "That he preferred the Scriptures before the Friends' books." But it was not to their writings only, it was to their extempore preachings also, that they attributed this paramount authority. One of their Preachers was asked; "Do you esteem your speakings to be of as great authority as any chapter in the Bible?" He answered in these words; "That which is spoken by the Spirit of Truth in any, is of as great authority as the Scriptures and Chapters are, and greater." See *Leslie's Works*, vol. ii. p. 59, 60.

siasm,

fiaſm, and all the tenets which are peculiar to it, but alſo the language and the manner in which theſe tenets are delivered, will depend upon the character and turn of mind that diſtinguiſhes the fanatic who teaches them. Thus ſome, breathing a dark and melancholy ſpirit, will ſo handle the word of God as to fill the mind with horror and conſternationⁱ: others, of a leſs reverent temper, will employ terms of ſtudied levity^k: and

ⁱ “ When Mr. Whitefield preached at Briſtol, he often uſed
 “ this dreadful imprecation: If what I ſay be not ſtrictly
 “ true, may all that ever heard me, may you all that now hear
 “ me, and all that ſhall hear me hereafter, riſe up in judgment,
 “ and rejoice at my damnation.” *Gent. Mag.* vol. ix. p. 295.
 The gloomy manner, in which both the Authors and the
 Preachers of the Methodiſt Communion frequently urged their
 tenets, is well known. Thus Mr. Weſley “ going to a woman’s
 “ houſe, aſked her whether ſhe had an *aſſurance* of her ſalva-
 “ tion: her anſwer was, ſhe hoped ſhe ſhould be ſaved, but had
 “ no abſolute aſſurance of it. Why then, he replied, you are
 “ in hell, you are damned already.” *Bp. of Exeter’s Letter, as*
printed in Methodiſm Unmaſked, by the Rev. T. E. Owen, p. 19.
 The method followed by ſome of the Teachers of this Commu-
 nion is thus deſcribed, *History of Modern Enthuſiaſm*, p. 115.
 “ They ſcare their audience with ſome ſhocking expreſſion;
 “ as, that Hell ſhakes in their faces; that Satan ſtands ready
 “ to ſnatch them away: and then they repeat three or four
 “ times, with a peculiar tone, the awful word damn’d! damn’d!
 “ damn’d!” See alſo Hampſon’s *Life of Weſley*, vol. ii. p. 70,
 71. where an account is given of a Preaching, “ at which ſe-
 “ veral declared, that their ſenſes were taken away.”

^k Many inſtances of the light and irreverent manner in which

the

others will be induced, from the warmth of their dispositions, to adopt modes of expression, if possible, still less becoming the purity of revealed Truth¹. The consequence of

the Enthusiastic Schismatics in the time of the Rebellion treated religious subjects, may be found in Dugdale's View, &c. and in Edward's Gangræna. In the present times, few things have occurred more deliberately irreverent than the conduct of Mr. Kilham, as recorded by himself. Thus he relates, that being opposed by the Players at Aberdeen, and racking all his ingenuity how to counteract them, "after *much prayer* on the subject," he says, "I resolved to preach from a passage in their bill, and published in the morning service, to do it in the evening. We had a very crowded house to hear my sermon, and I found *great liberty* (freedom of speech, owing to the assistance of the Holy Spirit,) in declaring the truth." P. 69. In another place he says, that the Society having proposed that the "next fast" (he does not mention what the fast was) "shall be converted into a day of thanksgiving, this appeared so strange and inconsistent to me, that I resolved to write a form of thanksgiving, as a burlesque on theirs; which I did, and sent it to London." P. 90. A remarkable instance of the irreverent manner in which divine service was once interrupted among the Methodists is preserved in *Gent. Mag.* vol. xlvii. p. 541.

¹ Mystics of all ages have applied the language, by which sensual affections are described, to spiritual devotion, in such a manner as to disgrace our holy Religion, and to lead the way to the grossest impurities. The expressions employed by the Moravians, in speaking of the wounds which the Holy Jesus (whom they impiously call their Mamma Jesua) received on the Cross, are so unbecoming the sacredness of the subject, that we dare not even repeat them. See Candid Narrative of the Rise and Progress of Moravians, by H. Rimius, p. 43. et seq. In like manner the language as well of Mr. Wesley and Mr. White-

which will be, that the minds of the unlearned will thus receive wrong impressions concerning the truth itself^m. Nor does the evil

field, as of their followers, is highly unbecoming. Thus Mr. Seward, "These five days I have kept my bed, and have had every day sweet communion with my dear Lord Jesus. I went to rest in the arms of my sweet Saviour, in the bosom of Christ." *Journal*, p. 1, 10, 20. So in Mr. Wesley's Third Journal, p. 27, 8. "The love of God was shed abroad in my heart, and a flame kindled there so violent, and yet so ravishing, that my body was almost torn asunder. I sweated, I trembled, I fainted—I could call for nothing else but 'Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly'—I was dissolved in love. My beloved is mine, and I am his; he has all charms.—He has ravished my heart—He is now in his garden, feeding among the lilies—O! I am sick of love. He is altogether lovely. O! how Jesus fills, Jesus extends, Jesus overwhelms the soul, in which he dwells." Many instances of the same stile used by Mr. Whitefield may be found in his letters. Thus; "I lean upon Christ's bosom from morning to night, nay, all the night long." *Lett.* 447. See note l. to page 253.

^m The following passages, doubtless, were not written with any wrong intention: it is evident however, that their consequences must be very prejudicial to those who should receive them incautiously. "Tell all, as they come in your way, that their prayers are heard." *Whitefield's Letters*, No. 1426. "Holiness—not built on the sandy bottom of our own faithfulness, but on Jesus, carries the believer on, to do and suffer, what a legal heart will shrink and boggle at." *Ibid.* 1009. So Mr. Wesley;

"Doom, if thou canst, to endless pains,

"And drive me from thy face.

Bp. Lawington, &c. Vol. I. part ii. p. 34.

"I saw the fountain opened in Christ's side: and so strong was my faith, that if I had all the sins of the whole world laid upon

stop here. Men being accustomed to hear holy things treated of in profane terms, will grow to disregard them. So that in a short time those high mysteries, which the angels who stand in the presence of the Almighty contemplate with humility, will be made to the scorner and the infidel, subjects of common ridicule and contempt.

V. And finally, to mention no other instance, Religious Enthusiasm tends to render nugatory, and even void, some of the most sacred of the commandments which our Blessed Lord has given us to obey.

His loving kindness, indeed, has studiously pointed out to us what are the duties to which the exercise of Christian Piety should be confined. But the Spirit of Enthusiasm persuades

“ upon me, I knew, and was sure, one drop of his blood was sufficient to atone for all.” *Wesley's Third Journal*, p. 26. And again : “ From the directions I received from God, this day, touching an affair of the greatest importance, I could not but observe, (as I had done many times before) the entire mistake of those who assert, ‘ God will not answer your prayer, unless your heart be wholly resigned to his will.’ My heart was not wholly resigned to his will—Yet I know, and am assured, he heard my voice, and did send forth his light and truth.” *Ditto First Journal*, p. 48. Mr. C. Wesley, addressing Mr. Whitefield, in the preface to his Third Journal, uses these very exceptionable expressions :

Scorn to contend with *flesh and blood*,
And trample on *so mean* a foe.

men to adopt such extravagant severities, as, had they really been enjoined by the Almighty, our rebellious dispositions would have called *burthens, imposed by an austere master*ⁿ, *grievous to be borne*. Hence it is that Enthusiasts so often practise themselves, and recommend to others, such exertions of devotional fervour, as must render them incapable of fulfilling the sacred duties of social life°. Hence it is too, that

ⁿ Luke xix. 21. xi. 46. The severities, which Mr. Whitefield practised before he attained to regeneration, are accurately described in his *Early Dealings*, sect. 2. “During this time,” he says, “I did little else beside kneel down by my bed-side. “It was then suggested to me, that Jesus Christ was among “the wild beasts, when he was tempted : so, to follow his example, I went into Christ Church Walk, and continued in “silent prayer under one of the trees, for near two hours, sometimes lying flat on my face.” He then enumerates the several austerities which he practised, and these, “with continued “abstinence, and inward conflicts, at length so emaciated my “body, that, finding I could scarce creep up stairs, I was obliged “to have a Physician.”

° In Mr. Wesley's life it is recorded, that one of the Methodist Societies broke up on a Sunday night very late, many of the congregation having passed two, three, or four hours on their knees, or prostrate on the floor, earnestly agonizing for mercy. Of these some spent the whole night in weeping and praying. Early in the morning the Preacher was sent for to a private house, and several persons joining him there, again they united in singing and praying. Others soon after assembled, and they continued, “without the least intermission,” thus occupied till night. They then repaired to the Church, nor did they break up till two the next morning, “which made,” says the biographer, “sixteen hours, without intermission, except
“while

they teach that we “ must be inured to the
“ ecstatic contemplation of heavenly objects,
“ before we can arrive at true heavenly-
“ mindedness ^P.” A doctrine, which is per-

“ while they were going from the private house to the Church.”
Coke's Life, &c. p. 467, 8.

^P Whitefield's Works, vol. i. p. 4. which is, in fact, the exact language of Mysticism: “ L'état passif consiste dans une contemplation passive qui est perpétuelle, et cette contemplation passive est une espèce d'extase continuelle, ou ligature miraculeuse des puissances, qui les met dans une impuissance réelle d'opérer librement.” *Explication des Maximes des Saints*, p. 137. This definition Fenelon considers to be false; but that which he substitutes in the place of it is nearly as exceptionable. See Article 30. and again Article 24. It cannot however be a matter of surprise that Mr. Whitefield should hold the language of the Mystics, when, for some time, he publicly professed their doctrines. For instance: he taught, that the seed of the woman (Jesus Christ) was spiritually formed in the heart of Eve, at the time of the promise—that we are to be baptised, not into the name, but into the nature of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—that the man Jesus Christ is to be spiritually formed in the heart—and that we are to be saved by an inherent Christ. Now these are so unequivocally the fundamental principles of Mysticism, that for some time the Quakers thought that Mr. W. was one of their own persuasion, and followed him accordingly; nor was it till after he had been instructed in the real nature of Calvinism, that he at last perceived that he had been preaching at the very same time two systems which were in direct opposition to each other. See Tucker's History of Methodism, p. 12. et seq. Yet it was at this very period that Mr. W. asserted, that the Holy Ghost led him into the knowledge of the Scriptures, even in the minutest circumstances: he expressly asserted also, that Calvinism was taught him immediately of God.

haps one of the most fatal that can be suggested: since not only will it prevent men from attaining to that perfection of which they are capable, in the hope of attaining to a perfection, which, by the very nature of things, is denied them; but it will encourage the growth of such passions as are the most repugnant to true holiness. For should a person persuade himself that he has arrived at that degree of angelic excellence which he is told he must acquire, it may be feared that he will be puffed up beyond measure with spiritual pride^a. And on the contrary, should he fail of attaining to this excellence, then he probably *will fall into the snare of the*

^a We find frequent instances in the writings of Mr. Wesley of the occurrence of this effect. Thus: "I met with one, who
" having been lifted up with the abundance of joy which God
" had given her, had fallen into such blasphemies and vain imaginations as are not common to men. In the same afternoon
" I found another instance nearly, I fear, of the same kind:
" One, who, after much of the love of God shed abroad in her
" heart, was become wise, far above what is written, and set her
" private revelations (so called) on the self same foot with the
" written word." *Fourth Journal*, p. 47. At another time he describes a woman "who on a sudden threw away the Bible,
" saying, 'I am good enough—I will never read or pray more—
" I don't desire to be better than I am—I am saved.' She
" spoke many things to the same effect, plainly shewing that
" the spirit of pride and of lies had full dominion over her."
Fourth Journal, p. 57.

devil^r; will be overwhelmed with despair^s; or will sink into hypocrisy^t.

How very different from any of the above suggestions are those which proceed from the pure spirit of Christianity! That, like the spirit of its divine Author, is a gentle spirit, a spirit of meekness, and of unassuming piety. It is not puffed up with the hopes of attaining to an excellence, which it never was de-

^r 1 Tim. iii. 7.

^s Despair and madness have in every age been the common attendants upon the preachings of Enthusiasts. It would be endless to enumerate instances. It is remarkable however, that though Mr. Wesley in his Journals mentions several of his followers who went mad, he never once seems to have been struck with the frequent recurrence of the fact; or to have suspected whether the effect might not have been the consequence of his doctrines, and his manner of enforcing them. Mr. W. even avows, that he sometimes preached designedly to agitate his audience. "I preached at Armley to many who wanted a *storm*, "being quite unnerved with constant sunshine." *Seventh Journal*. See *Methodism Unmasked*, p. 32, 3. and Bp. Lavington, &c. Preface to Vol. ii. p. 38, 39. where instances are adduced of persons who were driven to despair and madness, in consequence of the preaching of Enthusiasts. See also Second Letter to the Rev. G. Whitefield, p. 104.

^t The first impulse of Enthusiasm is generally so violent, that, while it lasts, people are carried to such heights in prayer, austerity, &c. as to procure themselves unbounded admiration. The impulse subsiding, it becomes impossible for them to persevere in those acts of devotion, and then they must either give up that claim to eminent sanctity which they have acquired, or else they must have recourse to art to support it. Perhaps there are few Religious Hypocrites who were not once sincere.

signed to attain ; it is not degraded by the performance of those services which it was directed to pay : but knowing that there is no possible mean of honouring God, but that of keeping his commandments, it reverences them all alike : it sees no distinctions between greater or smaller duties ; between such as are invidiously called human, and such as are enthusiastically termed angelic ; but piously considers all to be equally sacred, as being all derived from the will, and hallowed by the command of God^u.

Such then are the effects which will be produced by Religious Enthusiasm, without reference to Schism. And when we consider that the opinions in which they originate,

^u There is nothing on which Enthusiasts and Schismatics have so much insisted, as on rapturous and extemporaneous prayer. Their constant language is, “ that God’s people is a “ praying people :” and one of their charges against the established Clergy is, “ that they are destitute of divine grace, and “ every ministerial qualification, because they have neither the “ gift of prayer, nor preaching.” See *Mr. J. Parsons’s Sermon*. But the power of praying extempore is a faculty which, of all others, seems to be one that may be the most easily obtained, and has been the most frequently abused. It was a powerful instrument in the hand of Cromwell : for when he saw a fit occasion, he would get up, and pray for an hour together before the army. See *Dugdale’s View*, p. 391. For an account of Major Weir, who appears to have been a prodigy of iniquity, and yet was remarkable for his gift of prayer, see *Dr. Hicks’s Ravillac Redivivus*.

being

being derived, as it is believed, from divine communication, will therefore be propagated with confidence, zeal, and assiduity; when we consider too that this very confidence, and zeal, and assiduity, will always prejudice the minds of many in their favour^x, we cannot but conclude, that Enthusiasm must operate both powerfully and extensively to corrupt the purity of the faith, even though it be unconnected with Schism^y.

^x The confidence with which Mr. Wesley and Mr. Whitefield spoke of their assurances of salvation, &c. though highly improper, must have produced a great effect on the ignorant and weak-minded, among their followers. For some assertions made by Mr. Wesley, see Bp. Lavington, &c. Vol. I. part ii. p. 103. et seq. Mr. Whitefield declares, “that he knew some whose “salvation was written on their hearts as with a sun-beam.” In another place he says, “I have just now put my soul, as a “blank, into the hands of Jesus Christ, my Redeemer, and “desired him to write upon it what he pleases. *I know it will “be his own image.*” Lett. 524. See also Lett. 175. In another place, on going to America,

“His high commission to perform,”

he speaks with a confidence altogether unexampled:

“The day, the dreadful day’s at hand!

“In battle cover thou my head:

“Past is thy word—I here demand,

“And confident expect thine aid.

Third Journal, p. 114.

^y See this point pursued at length in Mr. Stinstra’s Pastoral Letter against Fanaticism. Though Mr. Pascal was not an Enthusiast, in the strict meaning of the word, yet his conduct merits

Let us now turn to examine that point, which was proposed as the more immediate object of our consideration; and let us enquire, whether all Schisms in general, and those in particular which have been caused by Enthusiasm, do not tend to corrupt that faith, which, when preserved entire and professed with a pure conscience, will be found *to be both the wisdom of God, and the power of God unto salvation*².

The first way, in which Schisms operate to corrupt the faith, is by confirming, and by giving perpetuity to Heresies.

For, strictly speaking, there is no necessary and unavoidable connection between these two offences. Cases may occur in which

merits the particular attention of those who are disposed towards religious delusion. See his Life, prefixed to his Thoughts on Religion, and the article Pascal in the General Dictionary. His two maxims were, to renounce every kind of gratification, and all superfluity. In adherence to these principles, he would not so much as taste what he eat: and he would not shew any signs of natural affection to his nearest relations. By these, and by many other incredible austerities, he so broke his constitution, which was naturally delicate, that he died before he was forty. This particular instance of the fatal effect of an enthusiastic refinement upon religious duty, is to be so much the more lamented, as otherwise Mr. Pascal might have devoted his abilities, which were eminently great, to the general benefit of mankind.

² Rom. i. 16. 1 Cor. i. 24.

they

they shall exist totally distinct from each other. Thus individuals openly professing heretical opinions, will nevertheless sometimes remain in communion with the pure Apostolical Church. And, in like manner, others holding the faith undefiled, as far as points of doctrine are concerned, may still be led from motives of pride, or ambition, or discontent, to establish schismatical Communions^a. The separate existence of these two offences is not common indeed: but it is neither this circumstance, nor yet their respective sinfulness, that is to determine the point in question. If it can be shewn that any heretical doctrine, however mischievous, could produce, compa-

^a A remarkable instance of this occurs in the Schism of the Donatists. The doctrines which they maintained at the time of their separation, were those of the Catholic Church. Whatever difference of opinion they professed afterwards, respecting the nullity of Baptism and Ordination, unless administered in their own Church; and the re-baptizing those who were admitted into their Communion, this arose in the course of the dispute. The sole ground of the Schism was the opposition which was made to Cæcilianus, who was consecrated to the Bishopric of Carthage, without the consent of the Numidian Bishops. This these latter resented; and having declared the consecration of Cæcilianus to be invalid, they proceeded to appoint Majorinus Bishop in his stead. See Mosheim. Cent. IV. p. ii. c. 5. Hist. Eccles. Magdeburgica. Cent. vii. p. 376, 7, 8. and Valesius de Schismate Donatistarum. Hist. Eccles. Scriptores. Ed. Reading. vol. i. p. 775.

ratively speaking, little injury to the Church of Christ, unless it were for the instrumentality of Schism; we then cannot but consider Schism to be ultimately the occasion of almost all the injury, which the Church may in consequence sustain.

Not that it should be inferred, that this mode of reasoning tends to prove, or even to insinuate, that Heresies are so far in themselves indifferent, as to derive their power of corrupting the purity of the Faith solely from the circumstance of their being connected with Schism. Far from it. No case can occur in which heretical doctrines must not produce some effect on Christianity, which will be more or less fatal, as the quality of the doctrines themselves shall decide. What we contend for is this: That as the sphere of their action would be very limited, were it not for the co-operation of Schism; nay, as without this co-operation they might die away with the very persons from whom they originated, the question, as far at least as it comes immediately before us, should seem to be decided. For we cannot but have observed, that all human opinions, of whatever nature they may be; that all sciences, and all arts, when they are confined to those individuals who are their first inventors; or when
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they are communicated to a few disciples only, have but a precarious existence ; that generally they are soon neglected, and often are forgotten. For this reason therefore, mankind have always endeavoured to connect, as much as possible, the existence of such knowledge as they wish to perpetuate, with the interest of some sect, or community. They reason, and justly too, that the human mind is not only fond of the appearance and arrangement of system, but that it will attach itself to those tenets which are made the distinguishing characteristics of a Sect, more readily than to any other. For it is observable, that all men take a personal interest in the defence, or in the propagation of such opinions as they consider to be peculiar to their own community ; that they make these the test and bond of union among themselves ; and that being once pledged mutually to support the same common sentiments, their pride and self-love will afterwards be gratified in maintaining them, in defiance to the opposition or the censures of the world.

Admitting then these truths, and continually bearing in mind that the object, either secretly proposed, or openly avowed in Schism, is to give permanency to a peculiar set of opinions, we must allow, that Schism will
produce,

produce, if not immediately as its primary object, mediately at least, as its unavoidable consequence, the corruption of the faith. So that the question might be, not merely whether Schism do produce the effect which we have assigned to it; but whether it do not tend, all circumstances considered, more than any other cause, to the subversion of Christianity.

A second reason why Schisms will injure the purity of the faith is this: That nothing introduces amongst men unsettled notions of Religion, so much as divisions in the Church.

Perhaps indeed it may be thought, that here we consider that to be the cause, which is in reality the effect. So that it should rather have been stated, that the unsettled notions, which men entertain with respect to Religion, occasion the increase of Schism. But though it be true that Schism will naturally follow the public profession of new opinions; and though, consequently, in proportion to the variety of these opinions, will be the frequency of Schism; yet, if we look further, and enquire what is the cause why men are so disposed to affect novel doctrines, we probably shall find it to be that, which has been just mentioned.

Whenever an individual founds a separate
Com-

Communion, it will naturally be inferred, either that a new interpretation of the Scriptures has been discovered, or else that something has been added to them, which renders them more complete than they were before. With the multiplication of Schisms therefore is connected the belief, that Religion is capable of receiving material alterations. Nor is it possible that the generality of mankind should form any other conclusion. For it must be evident to them, that all Schismatics, in proportion as they are intent upon establishing their Communions, are careful to insist on some one leading principle, which shall serve to distinguish them from that regular Church, the pale of which they have abandoned.

If this were done in points of speculative science only, no ill consequence would ensue. For as it never was pretended that knowledge of this nature is to be judged of according to one certain revealed standard, it is expected, that in all such enquiries, repeated disagreements will be found. Thus in the investigation of metaphysical truths, systems may be raised, which shall soon be overthrown by others more perfect; and these too in their turn may be proved to be in part erroneous, and shall be superseded; and yet from these
several

several successive variations no argument can be drawn, either to disprove the existence of those truths which are sought after, or to discredit their authority when they shall be once discovered. And that for the reason which has been assigned.

But the case is widely different with respect to the Christian faith. Of this it is asserted, not only that it contains certain truths which are perfect in themselves, but also that the Almighty has given us a written word, to be an immutable and an infallible standard, whereby every man may ascertain what those truths are. It is asserted also, that one of the peculiar benefits which will result from the communication of this revealed and written law is, that thus we may become one body, as well as one spirit: that is, that we may all agree in the Unity of Church Communion, as well as in the Unity of Faith.

But when these objects are not accomplished; when, on the contrary, there is a great variety of communions, each of which has a mode of belief peculiar to itself; though each at the same time declares, that its doctrines are strictly conformable to the one infallible standard of Scripture; we then are naturally led to enquire, what are the probable effects which will be produced in consequence
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upon the minds of the community at large. Certainly, while some will be induced to doubt the authenticity of this revealed standard altogether; and while many will question its sufficiency; others, and these the greater number, will assume to themselves the liberty of departing from it at pleasure.

Had the Unity of the Church been preserved entire from the times of the Apostles to the present day, this circumstance would have afforded so strong an argument against the truth of any doctrines which, if adopted, would lead to the violation of that Unity, that it would probably be sufficient of itself to induce all men to reject them. But when on every side is witnessed the rise of new Sects, and when each of these claims a right to interpret Scripture as it pleases, even though the interpretation adopted be absolutely inconsistent with all that have been before advanced; it then amounts almost to a moral certainty, that each individual, who has some scruple to remove, or some speculative fancy to indulge, will interpret Scripture himself in that manner which shall best accord with his inclinations, or confirm his prejudices.

Now, should this mode of reasoning be just, it will follow, that when Schisms are multiplied publicly in the Church, then erroneous opinions will multiply rapidly among

all ranks of men in private. For there being no one Church which shall be universally admitted to be the “ Ark and depository of the “ truth ;” no one Ministry, at *whose mouth* men shall think themselves bound *to seek the law*^b, each individual will make his own judgment a law unto himself.

A reference to the history of our Church, when it was so mournfully rent with Schism in the seventeenth century, will abundantly prove the justness of this conclusion. Neither in this kingdom, nor perhaps in any other, did there ever appear so many, or such flagrant Schisms, as during that period ; and at the same time never were there so many and such daring heresies advanced. Not only did it seem that every thing was revived which had been taught by Enthusiasts of former ages, but that even the invention of men was tortured to add new enormities to the old. It will now hardly be believed, that in those days it was publicly taught, that “ the Almighty Father was the Author of the sinfulness of his people^c, and that lies proceeded from his mouth^d.” Of the Blessed

^b Malachi ii. 7.

^c See Catalogue of Heresies, preserved in Edwards' Gangræna, Part I. p. 18. No. 11.

^d Ibid. No. 12

Son likewise it was asserted, “ that he was
 “ God only nominally^e; that he was man
 “ from eternity^f; that we might be saved
 “ without him^g; that his sufferings were no
 “ satisfaction for sin^h; and that he was himself
 “ a sinnerⁱ.” Christian piety recoils at the very
 recital of opinions so enormous. Their very
 enormity indeed serves as their confutation.
 It is important however to remark, that they
 never would have been tolerated, had it not
 been that the several Schismatics of those days,
 having each some peculiar doctrine to en-
 force, were either too much occupied to con-

^e See Catalogue of Heresies, preserved in Edwards' *Gangræna*,
 Part I. No. 27.

^f Ibid. No. 30.

^g Ibid. No. 45.

^h Ibid. No. 39, 40.

ⁱ Ibid. page 217. The whole of that work is well deserving
 attention, as it exhibits a faithful picture of the enormities of
 those unhappy times: a picture indeed so full of horror, that
 it is painful, even at this distance, to contemplate it. It is
 proper to observe, that Mr. Edwards was himself an enemy to
 Episcopacy; that he was a zealous supporter of the Rebellion;
 and that he declares, that the sole motive that induced him to
 write his *Gangræna*, was his detestation of the false doctrines,
 and blasphemies, and Schisms, which he saw daily multiplied
 on all sides. For a list of the Heresies which were “ revived,
 “ or hatched at the fall of our Church Government,” see also
 Ross's *View of all Religions*, ed. 1672. p. 422. et seq. and
Foxes and Fire-brands, by Sir J. Ware. Part ii. p. 197. et seq.

trovert the errors which other Sectaries advanced; or too much bent on establishing their own Communions, not to avail themselves gladly of any circumstance, by which they thought that end might be promoted.

Such then were the tenets, subversive of the principles of Christianity, which were devised and daringly propagated in those times of religious dissension. And what shall we say? As the desolation of the cities upon which have been accomplished those threats of divine vengeance that were foretold in prophecy, is yet visible among the nations: as Tyre still remains *a place for the spreading of nets*^k, and *Babylon, pools of water for the possession of the bittern*^l, in order that mankind may for ever contemplate the fatal consequences which attend upon irreligious pride: so, in like manner, may we not regard those tremendous monuments of impiety which stand recorded in the history of our Church during its humiliation, to be, as it were, memorials to latest generations, that they may learn in how fearful a manner the rebellious Spirit of Schism will operate to destroy the purity of the Christian Faith?

A third consequence resulting from the in-

^k Ezekiel xxvi. 5.

^l Isaiah xiv. 23.

crease of Schisms, is the establishment of an unbounded Scepticism.

This consequence indeed, with the subsequent progress from Scepticism to Infidelity; from questioning the essential doctrines of Christianity, to the absolute denial of them, is so unavoidable, that it cannot well escape observation; and as it has been already adverted to in a former part of this enquiry^m, we need not here insist upon it. We cannot forbear remarking however, that the very same principle which leads to Infidelity, will lead to Atheism. In fact, they seem to be but different degrees and variations of the same offence. Certainly they both proceed from the same vitiated state of the heart, the same perversion of the understanding.

Which being the case, as it seems to be improbable that actual Infidelity should ever be long separated from habitual Scepticism; and as it is impossible afterwards to say how far Infidelity shall extend, or to what objects it will be applied, what is the conduct which we ought to pursue? Surely, as there is something so tremendous in the idea of denying that God, who hath *bought us with a price*ⁿ,

^m See pages 79, 80.

ⁿ 1 Cor. vi. 20.

even his own humiliation and sufferings; of rejecting his intercession, and of *counting his blood an unholy thing* °: as there is something too, far beyond all imagination gloomy in the thought of entering hopeless into eternity, and of being hurried before the tribunal of Him, whose existence may have been denied here, but who shall be hereafter seen face to face, armed with all the terrors of Almighty vengeance, we cannot do less than earnestly beseech the Enthusiast, and the Schismatic, to reflect to what a state of unbounded misery they may become instrumental towards conducting the wretched Infidel.

I know indeed that such an intention is the furthest from their thoughts. But as we have shewn how probable it is that the increase of Schisms in the Church may lead to these consequences^p, once more we beseech them to consider, before they indulge in the vain ambition of being Founders of new Sects, that in so doing they may contribute to deprive some of their fellow-creatures of that

° Heb. x. 29.

^p So the great Lord Bacon observes, “that one of the causes of Atheism is, Divisions in Religion, if they be many; for any one main division addeth zeal on both sides; but many divisions introduce Atheism.” *Works*, 4to. ed. vol. i. p. 468. See also vol. iii. p. 157.

bleſſed hope of everlaſting glory, which can be obtained only by Faith in the merits, and in the mercies of an atoning and an interceding Redeemer.

A fourth evil ariſing from the increaſe of Schiſm, is, the facility which will in conſequence be afforded to impoſtors of forming and of propagating falſe Religions.

The truth of which poſition ſeems to be pointed out to us in Scripture. For when we conſider that our Bleſſed Lord has warned us to expect *false Chrifts* and *false Prophets*^r in thoſe days when offences and tribulation ſhall abound, we are led to conclude, that times of tumult and contention have in themſelves a natural tendency to favour religious impoſture. And if this be ſo, it cannot but follow, that thoſe times, above all others, will produce that effect, when the tumults and contentions which exiſt, ariſe from religious diſſenſions. Since not only is it evident that diſſenſions of this nature are ſuch as will diſtract the mind more forcibly than every other; but alſo that they are ſuch as tend particularly to weaken thoſe principles which would otherwiſe prevent the propagation of religious impoſture. And this will be evident, if we re-

^r Matt. xxiv. 24. Mark xiii. 22.

fer to the primary source of all human actions, the passions of the human heart; and enquire, whether, under the circumstances specified, their natural operation will not be to produce the effect which has been mentioned.

It is observable then, that there exists in the minds of some men a strong ambitious principle, which leads them to seek after pre-eminence, in order to obtain what seems to them to be the greatest earthly good, the exercise of authority, and the power of governing. As to the particular mode of authority which may be exercised, this, generally speaking, will be indifferent to them. So long as they may but command the obedience, and direct the opinions of mankind, it seems to them to be of little importance whether this be done by spiritual, or by worldly means. Having then for their sole object the attainment of pre-eminence, they will always watch narrowly the temper and the genius of the age and country to which they belong. And as they are sensible that times, like men, have their peculiar characters, they will set themselves to discover what is the principle which has the greatest influence at the period in which they live. This being ascertained, they will then avail themselves of
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it, as of an instrument whereby they may acquire that pre-eminence, to which they are conscious they can never hope to attain by any other means.

Should it then happen that a person of a peculiarly daring and ambitious temper were to observe, that all respect for the sacredness of Divine Institutions was weakened in the minds of the community at large, by the increase of Schism; should he perceive also that vague and unsettled notions in religion were prevalent, and that there was a general propensity to adopt novel sentiments, and to disbelieve, and even to reject, revealed truth, it must be manifest, that he would make use of these circumstances for the accomplishment of his designs. According to the powers of his mind therefore, or to the boldness of his temper, he will place himself at the head of a new Sect, or of a new Religion; he will assume the title either of a Teacher, or of a Prophet.

To shew that this event, whenever it shall occur, may be considered as the consequence of Schism, it will be proper to add the following observations.

If in Civil Communities no one will attempt to erect new forms of Government, so long as the great body of the society seems dis-

disposed to maintain inviolate that order of things which the laws of those communities shall have established ; every principle of reason must lead us, in like manner, to conclude, that no one will attempt the introduction of new religious systems, so long as the piety with which all ranks adhere to the Established Church renders it more than probable, that every proposal to vary from it will be rejected with firmness and abhorrence.

In fact, a little reflection will teach us that in this, as in other cases, there is a strict analogy between that which passes in the mind of an individual, and that which influences the mind of society at large. For instance. In the mind of an individual all correct notions of moral good must have been confounded ; vague ideas of right and wrong must have been substituted in their stead ; the thought of gratification must have solicited desire, and the prospect of success must have strengthened hope, before any one will be induced to violate wilfully the acknowledged restraints of moral law. Thus, in like manner, in public communities, long established opinions respecting the nature of obedience must have been shaken and supplanted ; false and imperfect notions must have succeeded in
their

their place ; something must have preceded the idea of change to make it appear desirable ; and something must have been done gradually to prepare the great body of society to accept it, before any one will venture to present a new, or to attempt the removal of an old and long established Form of Government. He who affects any change of importance must be considered as having improved the means of success which he found existing, and not as having created them altogether.

The justness of these remarks, as applicable to our present argument, will be fully evinced by a review of the circumstances which gave birth to the ambition, which matured the designs, and which ultimately crowned with success the daring imposture of Mahomet^s.

For not to enumerate the several causes which may be supposed to have contributed towards that event, what we would particu-

^s When this great deceiver was announced in the awful language of the Spirit, as the " First Woe," (see Revel. viii. 13.) may we not humbly venture to say, that he was thus characterised, not because Omnipotence sent him into the world expressly to establish a false Religion ; but because Omniscience foreknew that that Impostor, availing himself of the corruptions and the discords of the Church, which at that time would exist, would succeed in establishing that system of religious imposture, which would inevitably become the source of infinite woe to Christianity.

larly insist on is, that ferment of Religious dissension, which then raged in the Christian Church.

The factions which supported the Arian, and the other greater Heresies, so far from being extinct, were still engaged in propagating their respective tenets with unremitting zeal. The bloody Schism of the Donatists, which had been considerably repressed, was beginning to recover its former strength, and threatened once more a renewal of those enormities which it occasioned, when, supported by its savage partisans, it spread devastation through the Churches of Africa^t. Meanwhile the Capital resounded with the fierceness of new controversies; and the ruling powers themselves, instead of repressing, had, by an unseasonable policy, heightened the flame of religious discord^u. At this moment did Mahomet appear.

^t The cause of the Donatists was chiefly supported by a set of troops called Circumcelliones, who appear to have been equally savage and intrepid. For an account of them, see Mosheim, Cent. IV. part ii. chap. 5. and more fully, Hist. Eccles. Magdeburgica, Cent. IV. p. 378.

^u The Emperor Heraclius, in the hope of uniting contending parties, publicly countenanced the Sect of the Monothelytes, which then first appeared. But this Sect, strengthened by his support, soon became formidable, and excited the most bitter animosities in the Church. See Mosheim, Cent. VII. part ii.

His daring and comprehensive mind seems early to have aspired after more than common pre-eminence. He soon perceived however, that from the ordinary means of ambition he had little to expect.

But when he observed how absolute that influence was, which religious opinions maintained over the minds of mankind, he probably reasoned with himself, that could he frame a system, which, at the same time that it claimed the sacredness of Revelation, might nevertheless be propagated by the sword, he then should be able to attain to a pre-eminence in greatness and in power, to which human ambition had seldom been able to aspire. For, if he could succeed in uniting these two objects, he foresaw that every proselyte he should gain to his doctrines, would become a zealous soldier in his cause; and that thus, in the same proportion in which he was received as a Prophet, he would be acknowledged as a Conqueror.

chap. 4. and Hist. Eccles. Magdeburgica, Cent. VII. p. 129. It is important to remark, that the enthusiastic Sect of the Montanists, which had contributed essentially to the support of the Manichæan Heresy, still operated fatally to facilitate the progress of the Mahometan Religion, by disposing the minds of men to receive its unholy doctrines. See Hist. of Montanism, Article xviii. and xix. and Bp. Lavington, Vol. I. part i. p. 7.

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The design was a vast one: but the event has proved that it was not chimerical. At any other period perhaps, mankind would have indignantly rejected as false, a Religion, which, professing to have been revealed immediately from the God of peace, was nevertheless to be propagated, at his express command, by the sword. But the sanguinary conduct of Christian Sectaries had sufficiently prepared the minds of men to admit so glaring a contradiction. At any other period also, the very supposition of a new Revelation, which was to supersede the Gospel, would have united all Communions to defend the common cause of Christianity. But the crafty Arab had wisely calculated the power of religious animosities. He believed, and he was not disappointed in his conjecture, that the hatred, which Christian Sectaries bore to one another, was such as would not only induce them to suffer his pretensions to gain strength unopposed, but would even enable him to arm them against one another in his own cause. As several of the first victories, which the Infidels obtained over the Christians, were gained by means of Christian Sectaries^{*};

^{*} Mosheim's Eccles. Hist. Cent. VII. part i. chap. ii. sect. 4. and part ii. chap. 4. sect. 3.

and as it was by their arms that they won some of the provinces which they conquered from the Roman Empire; these circumstances appear to be of themselves sufficient to prove, that perhaps even the existence, and that certainly the success of that false Prophet's design, is to be attributed principally to the divisions of the Christian Church^y.

It seems then to be evident, that Schisms have a tendency, as was asserted, both to give birth to Religious Impostures, and to contribute to their success.

But there may be some, who, not being willing to consider the consequences of Schism to be as fatal as we have represented them to be, will endeavour to weaken the force of the above conclusion, by suggesting, that little is gained in any cause by proving extreme cases. For they will argue, that, granting that the Mahometan Religion did owe its

^y It is a strong confirmation of the justness of this conclusion, that Mahomet himself seems to have considered the Schisms of the Christians to have been one of the causes of his success.—“ Mankind had but one Religion. God sent them
“ Prophets to convey to them his promises, and to denounce
“ his judgments. He gave them the Scriptures also, sealed
“ with the seal of truth, to the end that these might decide the
“ controversies of men. Those who received the Apostles, al-
“ though they knew the predictions of the Lord, disputed.
“ Envy armed them against each other: but God conducted
“ the believer to that truth, which was the object of their dis-
“ pute.” See Coran by Savary, vol. i. p. 38. and Sale, p. 24.

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establishment chiefly to the animosities which were kindled among Christian Sectaries; granting also, that the very idea of the imposture was first suggested by those corruptions in the faith which the prevalence of Schism had occasioned; still we have no reason to infer, that any similar project will again be either conceived, or executed.

Let this be allowed: let us say that we have nothing to fear from the arms or the arts of a second Mahomet! In what manner does this affect the question? Before we suffer any principle to be adopted, it is our duty, as reasonable beings, to ascertain what the consequences are, to which that principle will lead. If it can be proved that these are dangerous, this circumstance alone will shew the propriety of our rejecting it, and not the greater or less degree of probability which there may chance to be, of those consequences actually occurring.

But after all, we ought to consider, that we are not at present so much concerned with the extent, as with the existence of the evil. If therefore, the same causes which enabled the Impostor Mahomet to deceive formerly so large a portion of the world, shall enable another False Prophet to deceive now but a single Congregation, it must be acknowledged, that they who fall
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within the sphere of the latter, however limited that sphere may be, will find their future hopes to be as much affected in consequence, as if the imposture by which they have been deluded, were of sufficient importance to engage the attention of the whole earth.

Why, however, is it to be so hastily inferred, that Religious imposture is an evil which cannot again occur? If this opinion be founded on the supposition, that there exists no probable means for the accomplishment of such an undertaking, we must suggest, that many arguments may be brought, which will lead us to form a different conclusion. It appears probable indeed, that thick darkness will not again return to cover the earth; it is also probable, that no one will ever be again enabled to enforce his pretensions as a Prophet, at the head of armed proselytes. We have not therefore much to fear either from ignorance on the one hand, or from force on the other. It may be reasonably doubted, however, whether an universal laxity in points of Religious Faith; whether a total disregard to the sacredness of divine institutions; and an indifference to the public profession and dissemination of error, might not ultimately become instruments for the propagation

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pagation of false Religion, full as deadly and as powerful even as the sword of Mahomet^z.

Now, that there have been periods when there has existed in the minds of men that general carelessness about religious principles which has just been noted, is a fact too obvious to require here particular proof. And were we to examine what the cause was, in which such a carelessness originated, we should find it to be that which we have already proved to be injurious, in so many points, to the purity of the Christian Faith. For when a variety of Schisms appear, each acting upon its own distinct principles, and each aiming to secure its own establishment,

^z The means which Voltaire, D'Alembert, and Diderot employed to promote the success of their conspiracy against Christianity, were precisely those which have been just enumerated. They taught men that Christian establishments were only so many different modes of superstition; that an attachment to regular institutions was the darkest bigotry: and they talked in raptures of the God of nature, and of universal toleration. When we consider the progress which that Anti-christian conspiracy made, and the many millions, who, in different countries, were in consequence seduced to quit the high hope of their calling, it would be infatuation not to allow, that even in the present state of Society, if men have the heart to conceive the design, they never will want the means of propagating systems subversive of Christianity. See the Charge of the Bp. of Rochester, (now St. Asaph) in the year 1800.

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they naturally perceive that it must involve the ruin of their common cause, were they to insist on the necessity, or even the propriety, of adhering to one inviolable standard, whether of Religious worship, or of Religious belief. They therefore affect to feel a perfect indifference for every thing but what they choose to consider as essentials: they profess the most liberal sentiments of respect for every Communion that differs from their own; and they give to Scripture such interpretations as may seem to justify their studied disregard of Church Unity^a. It cannot but be evident that this mode of conduct is in direct opposition to many positive commands of Scripture. But there is no other, which Schismatics can pursue. Were they to act differently, they would either be obliged to relinquish their own principles, or else to pass censure upon those Sectaries, who in fact are their companions in Schism.

^a Thus two of the reasons assigned why the Church Polity of the modern Non-conformists "is the wisest in the world, "are; That with them conscience is its own judge of the "sense of Scripture;" and that "they despise the cant of "Heresy; Clergy; the Church; ease to doubting consciences," &c, &c. and it is in consequence declared, that "the Non-conformists are, with all their infirmities, the excellent of the "earth." *Plan of Lectures on the Principles of Non-conformity, by R. Robinson, p. 51.*

It is by no means our intention to enumerate all the evil consequences which will result from such a manner of proceeding. There is one, however, which is in itself so important, and is so intimately connected with the subject which we are considering, that it must not be passed over in silence.

For when men are once accustomed to this laxity of opinion concerning the necessity of adhering, in points of discipline, to one inviolable standard, they will, with very little hesitation, proceed to assert, (what is the constant assertion of all Enthusiasts) that true Religion and all Ecclesiastical Establishments are points in themselves totally distinct : that to be a good Christian, it is only necessary to be a good believer : and that all outward forms of Church government and discipline are of equal authority, and are entitled to an equal degree of respect ^b.

^b That all new Separatists should adopt such language, is no more than might be expected. It must be a matter of surprise, however, that the learned Mosheim should assert, " That the true and genuine followers of Jesus Christ are but little concerned about the outward forms of Ecclesiastical government and discipline, knowing that real Religion consists in faith and charity, and not in external rites and ceremonies." *Eccles. Hist.* ed. 4to. vol. ii. p. 570. What good consequence could he have expected would result from such an unqualified assertion as this? Surely he must have known, that whatever confidence

To what fatal consequences must these sentiments lead ! For if every possible Communion were to be admitted to be so far of equal authority, as to be entitled each to an equal degree of respect, we then should be compelled to admit the equal authority of the different principles, on which those several Communions were respectively founded. And were this done, it is unnecessary to add, that we could no longer, with any propriety, *contend, even for that faith, which was once delivered to the Saints*^c: no longer could we insist on the necessity of preserving, as we are solemnly commanded to do, the unity of that visible Church, which, in the striking lan-

guage men seem to place in the propriety of their convictions, they constantly seek to justify their conduct by the example, and by the authority of others. The learned Mosheim therefore might have been well aware, that this opinion of his, however ill founded, would be soon moulded into some still more exceptionable shape, to serve the purposes of the Schismatic and the Enthusiast.

^c Jude 3. 2 Tim. i. 13. How different to these precepts is the language which is adopted by modern Schismatics ! Thus they assert, "that the notion of Uniformity is a fatal notion—" that Unity of Faith, as the test of a true Church, is an absurd dogma, which misled those worthy men, the Reformers, and made them adopt the spirit of persecution—that it is "the child of the mother of abominations, (Revel. xvii. 5.) whom folly had produced, and whom cruelty had hitherto "maintained." *Methodist Monitor*, vol. i. p. 6.

guage of the Apostle, is called, *the body of Christ*^d.

But it is not only the consequences which result from such lax opinions concerning Church Government, that we must reprobate; it is against the principle itself, by which those opinions are recommended, that we must protest. I mean, against what is called liberality of sentiment. A principle which is in the mouths of all, and is abused by all, who wish to free themselves from the obligations as well of moral obedience, as of Church Unity.

It is difficult to say what precise notion is to be affixed to these words, liberality of sentiment, if the object, to which they are applied, be, as in the present case, our belief in Revealed Truth. When we first hear them, indeed, they certainly excite in the mind a vague, but a pleasing idea, of a refined and benevolent candour; and therefore we incautiously permit ourselves to adopt them. This very circumstance however will but make their use so much the more dangerous, if it should be found, that the principle, on which the notion itself is founded, be erroneous.

When by liberality of sentiment no more is meant than that ingenuous turn of mind,

^d Coloss. i. 24.

which leads us to grant to others what we preserve to ourselves, the dispassionate freedom of enquiry, then it cannot but be highly approved. For it is thus only that we can ensure that every proposition, which is made the object of belief, shall be so believed, upon the conviction of its truth. So far then from condemning liberality of sentiment, when considered in this point of view, we confess that it is a principle to which we stand indebted for much of that improvement, which has been made in the science of truth. Nay we even contend, that this very principle is strongly inculcated in the Scriptures, when they exhort us to bring a simple, a pure, a teachable, an humble heart to the hearing of the word. For what can be more contrary to real liberality of sentiment, than that *evil heart of unbelief* which is pre-occupied with the persuasion, that the means of salvation offered to us in the Gospel are not, as the humble believer affirms them to be, the only means by which we can inherit life everlasting?

But when we are told, that liberality of sentiment is to regulate our notions concerning the expediency, or the necessity of Revealed Truths; when it is to affect even the measure of our obedience to positive commandments; it must then be considered to

be either a principle erroneous in itself, or else one that necessarily is made such, by being applied to cases, to which it was never designed that it should apply. For let us attend to the consequences. If we are allowed to insist upon such of God's Revelations only, as shall be consistent with our own conceptions of their expediency; if we are at liberty to concede any points which shall be found offensive to those who belong to Communions differing from our own; it is evident that we admit a principle, which may be used to recommend even Pagan Idolatry itself. The language which the advocates for this liberal spirit employ, clearly demonstrates what is its unavoidable tendency.

It is said, for instance, that a Theology, which reduces Religious Faith to one established and immutable standard, "is one of the greatest curses that ever afflicted the human race." That "the attempt to soften the unyielding temper of the Christian Religion with the mild spirit of Philosophy," was considered to be "too liberal and extensive a plan, to meet the approbation of a greedy and ambitious Clergy." And not to multiply instances, that the exalted lessons of Charity, which are taught us in the Scriptures, are far inferior to the bene-

benevolent sentiments of philanthropy, which are to be found in the Pagan Poets^e. Are not these, we may ask, the very arguments which were used by the Gentiles to prevent the propagation of Christianity? And if they were allowed to be just, would they not lead to the extirpation of the Truth? But we need not dwell on this point. The only conclusion we would draw, is this: That while Philosophy and Natural Religion are placed in such a pleasing point of view, in order to palliate the conduct of such as will not believe in Christianity; and while we are

^e Thus the above-cited author compares that passage from the *Odyssey* of Homer,

—προς γὰρ Διὸς εἰσὶν ἅπαντες
Ξεῖνοι τε πτωχοὶ τε· δοσὶς δ' ὀλίγη τε, Φίλη τε.

Lib. vi. v. 207.

with that of *Proverbs* xix. 17. “He that hath pity upon the
“ poor, lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath
“ given, will he pay him again.” “It is scarcely possible,”
he continues, “for any thing to be more different (than the
“ two sentiments.) Homer promises no other reward for cha-
“ rity, than the benevolence of the action itself; but the Israel-
“ ite holds out that, which has always been the great motive
“ for charity among his countrymen—the prospect of being
“ repaid tenfold. They are always ready to shew their bounty
“ upon such incentives, if they can be persuaded that they are
“ founded upon good security.” Do these words breathe any
thing of a liberal, a mild, a philosophic spirit? Strange! that
to see no merit in the Scriptures, should be considered as a sure
test of liberality of sentiment!

taught

taught to consider that an adherence to the Episcopal Church is the mark of a gloomy, a contracted, and a bigoted spirit, in order to justify those who separate from it, we may learn how to estimate that liberality of sentiment, which is now with so much assiduity inculcated^f.

^f Nothing can be more inconsistent than the conduct of those Schismatics, who profess themselves the advocates for this principle. Thus in the *Methodist Monitor*, vol. ii. p. 253. it is recommended in a particular treatise by an author, who exerted all his talents to impress on the minds of the Non-conforming Ministry, that implacable and undistinguishing hatred to the Episcopal Church, by which he himself was distinguished. See the notes to "*An Essay on the Composition of a Sermon, translated from the French of the Rev. T. Claude,*" by R. Robinson, with the Preface and the Life affixed. It is the same writer, I believe, who, directing Non-conformist Ministers in what tenets they are to teach their Catechumens, speaks thus of the Rulers of the Episcopal Church. "Place
" Prelates," he says, "and people before the Judge of the whole
" earth, at the last day—Represent the glorious Redeemer ex-
" hibiting his faithful servants, whom Prelacy ruined for claim-
" ing their natural and religious rights, and saying to these
" holy tyrants, 'These had meat, drink, and habitations; but
" ye reduced them to hunger, thirst, and banishment. I gave
" them cloathing, but ye stripped them naked; they had
" health and liberty from me, sickness and imprisonment from
" you. Depart." See *Plan of Lectures on the Principles of Non-conformity*, by R. Robinson, p. 13. What indignation would it not excite, if the Ministers of the Established Church were to use language such as this, in speaking of the Non-conformists! Yet Mr. R. is described as a person "raised up by the
" God of Glory to plead the rights of conscience against the
" intolerant

If, however, a principle thus liable to abuse must still be encouraged, it becomes us accurately to define, what are the limits to which it may extend, and what are the objects to which it can apply. For instance. We are to insist, that it ought to affect only the temper of mind in which each individual undertakes the examination of religious truths, and not the truths themselves: that it may lead him to be charitable in his judgment concerning the motives of another's conduct; but that it cannot alter the real quality of that conduct: and that it may lead him to encourage a spirit of Christian charity towards all who are not as strong in faith as himself; but that it will not allow him to be indifferent either to the increase of error, or to the defence of truth. For when the evidences in favour of the Christian doctrines are once fully established and admitted, then it is the mark of a noble, a great, and a liberal spirit to be firm and unwavering in the profession of them. But why are we ever to forget, what is of the utmost importance in the present question, that he alone who made a law, has the

"intolerant principles of both Churchmen and Dissenters."
Methodist Monitor, vol. ii. p. 373.

power of dispensing with obedience to that law? This principle is recognized as sacred, in all human establishments. What then can be a greater inconsistency than to say, that it is the proof of a liberal spirit to allow the violation of this principle in Religious Establishments? How can it be a mark of a superior mind, to be indifferent as to the deviations which are made from the one unalterable standard of Revealed Truth? Or how can it be the sign of a contracted one, to insist upon a strict adherence to those institutions, which the Almighty has given us, to be *statutes and ordinances for ever*?

It seems to be insinuated, indeed, in the present day, that it is the very perfection of the Christian character not to insist on any thing in Religion that may possibly give offence. And hence it is that so many argue that services ought to be changed, that Creeds ought to be removed, and that clauses ought to be omitted, in order to conciliate contending parties. But we must maintain, that, in the nature of things, no good can be gained by making such concessions as these. He who demands them, evidently shews, that he is determined not to admit our principles: so that there never can be any union, unless it be by our adoption of his.

Yet

Yet why should we have recourse to arguments to decide what conduct we ought on these occasions to pursue, when our duty is so clearly taught us by the example of our Blessed Lord himself? It was his most earnest desire, that all men should believe on him: nevertheless, he did not on that account forbear to insist on any necessary truth, even though he knew that it would be distasteful to the pride of the learned, or repugnant to the wishes of the multitude. When therefore some Schismatics suggest, that it is mere bigotry to suppose that every Communion will not equally entitle its members to the covenanted privileges attached to the Christian Church, we are to remember, that the Son of God did not scruple to say, that *the gate was narrow, and the path strait, which leadeth to eternal life*^f. And again, when others scruple not to call it prejudice to believe, that the *ministry of the word of reconciliation*^g is committed to one particular Priesthood, we are to call to mind Who it was that said, *whoever climbeth up into the fold is a thief and a robber*^h.

And now, what is the inference that we are to draw from these, and from all our preceding conclusions?

^f Matt. vii. 14.

^g 2 Cor. v. 18.

^h John x. 1.

If it have been proved that the very existence of Schism (how much more then the increase of Schism ?) has an unavoidable tendency to corrupt the purity of the Christian Faith; that it will perpetuate the fatal effects of Herefy; that it will promote the cause of Infidelity, and even of Atheism; that it will expose men to the arts of religious impostors; and finally, that it will introduce a general carelessness, and laxity of opinion in all things belonging to the Faith; can more be wanting to prove the necessity of restraining that Spirit of Enthusiasm which is one of the chief causes of Schism, by every appeal that can be made to the reason and the consciences of men? *Are not the days of the years of our pilgrimage full enough of evil*ⁱ? are not the trials to which our virtue is exposed from the corruptions of our nature sufficient? and must we increase them by wilfully multiplying sorrows, and by depriving ourselves of those very blessings, *Peace on earth, Good-will towards men*, which the infinite loving-kindness of our heavenly Father intended to give us in the pure Gospel of his Son?

Much were it to be wished that Christians would frequently make this point the subject

ⁱ Genesis xlvii. 9.

of their meditations ; and that, having considered what misery results from religious disunion, they would then reflect how great the increase of human happiness would be, were every Schism closed, and the name of all those bitter contentions forgotten, which, while they destroy the earthly glory of the Church of Christ, spread sorrow through the dwellings of his followers.

Surely this reflection alone ought to become a motive sufficiently strong to counteract the wild and delusive suggestions of Enthusiastic Pride, of Vanity, or Ambition. For could we frame to ourselves some adequate conception of that blessed tranquillity, which all the ends of the world would enjoy, if Unity were restored to the Christian Church ; I am confident that we could propose to ourselves no higher object of ambition, than the endeavouring to promote it. For then, all orders of Society being firmly united together in the bond of charity and brotherly love, we should behold accomplished, as far as in this life it could be accomplished, the blessings pronounced by our divine Lord himself.

They that mourned, should then be comforted¹;

They that hungered and thirsted after righteousness, should then be filled^m ;

¹ Matt. v. 4.

^m Matt. v. 6.

They that were merciful, should obtain mercyⁿ; and

Peace-makers should be called Blessed, for they are the children of God^o.

If then these are not visionary hopes, but certain and promised effects which must result from the Unity of the Christian Church, who is there that will not, *if it be but for his brethren and companions' sake^p*, pray earnestly to God, that he would once more *look upon us, and be merciful unto us^q*; that he would pity even those miseries which our own carnal diffensions have created; that he *would build the ruined places^r*; that he *would look down from heaven, and behold and visit the vine, which his right hand hath planted^s*, and that of his unbounded mercy he would restore *Peace to Jerusalem^t.*

ⁿ Matt. v. 7.

^o Matt. v. 9.

^p Psalm cxxii. 8.

^q Psalm cxix. 132.

^r Ezekiel xxxvi. 36.

^s Psalm lxxx. 14, 15.

^t In dismissing the point under consideration, it may be proper to add, that the conduct of the Missionaries, who were sent to propagate Christianity in Otaheite, will serve to shew in what manner the spirit of Sectarism might be brought to operate extensively to the injury of the Christian Faith. Those Missionaries were "chosen by a Committee of Ministers approved for "Evangelical Principles, as men of the most select piety;" (see an Account of a Missionary Voyage in the ship Duff, published by the directors of the Missionary Society, p. 4.) and they were put under the care of four persons, who are called "ordained Ministers." (*Ibid.* p. 5.) That they were Ministers really

really ordained by the Church of England, their subsequent conduct does not allow us to believe. The Rev. Dr. Haweis, and two other Directors, remained with the Missionaries till they sailed. (*Ibid.* p. 9, and 17.) Yet it should seem, that no instructions were given them what doctrines they were to propagate. For it was not till after they had been some time at sea, that a committee was formed, to settle what were “the truths which they were to promulgate, and teach among the heathen.” (*Ibid.* 395.) These were comprised in twenty-one Articles; some of which contained tenets differing from those of the Church of England. In such Articles as related to discipline, there was a wilful departure from those of our Establishment. See Article xx. of Marriage, and xxi. of the Burial of the Dead. In Article xiv. particularly, it is asserted, “that there is no other Head of the Church, but the Lord Jesus Christ; neither hath any temporal prince, secular power, or civil magistrate, any right to exercise any authority over her, *neither needeth she any establishments from them.*” This is asserting explicitly the doctrine of the Anabaptists. It is said also in the same Article, “that the Visible Church has the power to *chuse* its Ministers;” which is the principle of the Independants. So also in the xvth Article, only Pastors, or Bishops, and Deacons, are acknowledged; which is Presbyterianism. Why, may we ask with sorrow, why, when the blessed Light of Christianity is to be diffused among the heathen, must the seeds of future controversies and discords be sown? Why must the new Converts be led to disesteem the name of Episcopacy? But even this consideration is of less importance than the following. If Missionaries are at liberty to settle among themselves the doctrines which they shall propagate; and if this is to be done when they are at sea, far from all assistance, and without control, what is to prevent those who shall be employed on some future mission, from agreeing, either through ignorance or design, to propagate such doctrines, as shall be repugnant to the genuine tenets of Christianity?

SERMON VII.

MATTHEW x. 34.

THINK NOT THAT I AM COME TO SEND PEACE
ON EARTH : I CAME NOT TO SEND PEACE,
BUT A SWORD.

WE have shewn in what manner Schism tends unavoidably to corrupt the purity of the Christian Faith. And could it be proved that there was no other point in which it would be injurious to the cause of Christianity, sufficient will have been established to make us lament its existence, and deprecate its increase.

But we must now extend our view to other considerations. We must enquire whether Schism will not affect us equally as members of civil communities ? Whether it will not tend to break the bonds of social union, First, by dissolving the ties of natural affection, and the harmony of private families ; and Secondly, by exciting public dissensions ; by

supplying the means of subverting governments; and by instilling into the minds of men that religious animosity which will prevent, so long as it shall be permitted to operate, the diffusion of those blessings which were announced as the attendants on the Gospel, *Peace on earth, and good-will towards men*^a.

These then are the two points which shall be considered in the present Lecture. And should we be able to prove that the effects which we have specified are the inevitable consequences of Schism, perhaps no small benefit may ultimately be derived to the general cause of Christianity.

It is true that the sincere believer will not require this additional motive, to make him jealous for the preservation of the Unity of the Church. There are some however, who persuade themselves that there is little, if any, connection between the interests of Christ's visible kingdom upon earth, and the interests of the kingdoms of this world. These seem never to have enquired whether the question of Church Unity be as closely united with the great final objects of our Faith, as we have asserted it to be. In consequence of which they

^a Luke ii. 14.

scruple not to say, that all controversies respecting the sinfulness of Schism are of importance to those only who are attached to prior Establishments, or who are to be benefited by the preservation of them. But when it shall be proved to them, that the delusions of the Enthusiast, however extravagant and visionary they may be, tend nevertheless of necessity to affect dangerously the welfare of Civil Communities; when it shall be shewn to them likewise, that the Schisms which confound the peace of the Church, will ultimately confound the peaceful ordering of the State, they then probably may be led to examine the several points under consideration, with that seriousness which their high importance demands.

I know indeed that nothing is more common with Enthusiasts than to insist, that they acknowledge *the powers which are, to be of God*; and that they *cheerfully submit, for conscience sake, to every ordinance of Man*. They probably are sincere in their assertions. But they forget, that by introducing a principle which is subversive of obedience, they injure that very authority which they say they would support, more effectually than they could do, even by an act of open rebellion against it.

Not that they can be supposed to be altogether insensible to that connection, which of necessity exists between Civil and Religious Establishments. This, as an abstract truth, perhaps has never been denied by any of them. The misfortune however has always been, that Enthusiasts, in their zeal to propagate their doctrines, forget to weigh the uncertainty of the good which they promise to themselves from the end proposed, even if it could be attained, with the certainty of the evil which must follow from the employment of the means.

And yet if the case were fairly stated to them, it should seem that they could hardly hesitate about the conclusion which they ought to draw. For if they reflected on the one hand, that the doctrines which they are so zealous to establish, have been urged at different periods, and by different persons, with sincerity equal, with qualifications superior perhaps to their own ; and that nevertheless these doctrines have been rejected, sometimes because from reason they were proved to be erroneous ; at other times, because from experience they were found to be hurtful ; surely they could not persist in believing, that the cause of Christianity depended upon the suc-
cess

cesses of their systems^b. So also, on the other hand, if they considered that the immediate effect of Schisms in the Church is to destroy the peace and the well-being of society, they then could not but be sensible, that if they added to the number of those Schisms, they would not only contribute to injure the public good, by making the Gospel appear to be the cause of the evil ; but, they would give occasion to the enemies of Christ, to blaspheme

^b There is no one single circumstance which ought to convince Enthusiasts of their delusion more forcibly than this : That the doctrines which they believe themselves to have received, as new communications from Heaven, or which they affirm the Almighty has raised them up to teach, are nevertheless such doctrines as have been advanced by former heretics, or impostors ; and which having been found to be erroneous, had sunk into oblivion. Exactly thus the pretensions which were advanced by Mr. Wesley and Mr. Whitefield ; the opinions they maintained, and the conduct which they pursued, are nothing more than repetitions of the pretensions, the opinions, and the conduct, of that wild Enthusiast Montanus. See this remarkable coincidence proved from the History of Montanism, published several years before the appearance either of Mr. Wesley or Mr. Whitefield, by Bishop Lavington's *Enthus. &c.* Vol. I. part i. p. 1. to 8. In the same manner, were we to refer to Edwards's *Gangræna*, we should find that there are perhaps few of the doctrines which are taught by the Sectaries of the present day, and few of the practices adopted by them, which were not professed or maintained by the licentious Fanatics of the Rebellion. See *Gangræna*, part i. p. 18. et seq.

his holy name, and prejudice the minds of men against the reception of the truth.

Probably it might have been in reference to those bitter animosities, which our Blessed Lord foresaw would result from the religious dissensions of Christians, more even than in allusion to the persecutions which followed upon the first preaching of the Gospel, that he spoke those remarkable words which form the Text ^c.

Think not, he says, *that I am come to send peace on earth*; or, as it might perhaps with propriety be translated, *Think not that I am come to sow the seeds of peace*; I come not to sow the seeds of Peace, but of Dissension and War ^d.

Strictly speaking indeed, there is no necessity, that because men concur not in maintaining the same religious opinions, therefore they should not concur in supporting the same form of Civil Government. On the contrary, the general tendency of Christianity

^c See Whitby in loc.

^d Μη νομισητε οτι ηλθον βαλειν ειρηνην επι την γην· εκ ηλθον βαλειν ειρηνην, αλλα μαχαιραν. See Wetstein in loc. where he says; *βαλειν* proprie dicitur de jactu sementis in terram. *εμβαλων το σπερμα τη γη.* *Xenophb. Œcon.* c. 23. Et per translationem; *Serere civiles discordias.* *Liv.* iii. 40. *Hujus luctuosissimi belli tu semen fuisti.* *Cicero Philipp.* ii. 22.

is to soften the human heart, to make it peaceful, gentle, and forbearing. Nay, our Divine Master himself seems particularly so to have framed his precepts, that they might make his followers, in every possible situation, blameless in their political obedience; whence, to be *truce-breakers, to be traitors, and high-minded*, is to be, in fact, *reprobate concerning the Faith^c*.

But we are not here to speculate on what ought to have been the fruits of the Gospel in the conduct of believers. All enquiries which have for their sole object the desire of promoting practical utility, seek rather to ascertain what effects have already resulted from existing causes, than to dwell on the consequences which, under any given circumstances, might have been expected.

We will confine ourselves therefore to the examination of the two points which we have proposed to consider; and we will enquire first, Whether the unavoidable tendency of Schism be not to dissolve the bond of social union; by exciting public dissensions;

^c 2 Tim. iii. 3, 4, 8. In the same manner St. Jude, describing those who had *crept in unawares*, and corrupted the faith, and *despised dominion, and spoke evil of dignities*, declares that they were such, as *ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Korah*. V. 4. 8. II.

by supplying the means of subverting governments; and by instilling religious animosity into the minds of men.

Now it will surely be admitted to be a general proof of the truth of this position, that dissensions in the State have commonly been most prevalent, when Schisms and offences in the Church have most abounded.

That this is not the effect of mere accidental coincidence, but that, on the contrary, it is owing to that inseparable connection which the events themselves have with each other, may be reasonably inferred from the following observations.

We cannot but acknowledge, that every wilful and continued act of disobedience, of whatever nature it may be, must weaken the respect which we should otherwise entertain for the principle itself, upon which obedience is established : since obedience to law, whether moral or civil, whether public or private, is built confessedly upon one and the same foundation ; namely, on the necessity, for the sake of promoting general good, of adhering uniformly to one determinate and immutable order. The immediate operation of all law therefore, is to take from individuals the right of acting, either from the impulse of their passions, or from their own false
and

and imperfect notions of expediency, whenever the consequence of their acting thus would be prejudicial to the general good of the community. Whence it follows, that he who has been the author of any wilful Schism, must have acted thus from one of the following causes. Either, I. from having been altogether ignorant of the nature and of the sacredness of legal obligation: or, II. from having persuaded himself that he has the power of dispensing with it: or, III. from despising its restraint, when it opposes either his own particular wishes, or opinions.

Schism then is a premeditated act, which is to be attributed either to an ignorance that prevents men from understanding the real importance of law; or to a presumption that leads them to disregard it. If therefore any one, having once wilfully destroyed the order that has been established in the Church, shall afterwards be induced to wish that order destroyed which has been established in the State; let it be asked, whether there would exist in his mind any principle to restrain him from attempting it? If there would be none, (and none in truth there appears to be) then it cannot but be manifest, that the very connection which exists between all obedience is in itself so intimate, that when
the

the minds of men shall have been accustomed to disregard Unity in the Church, it is no more than reasonable to infer, that as occasions present themselves, they will disregard it likewise in the State.

To this conclusion some may object, because it has been observed, that under Pagan Governments, professors of all religions, and philosophers of all Sects, have lived together, both in public and private, in the bonds of civil and domestic union ; each of them nevertheless remaining attached to his own peculiar opinions ; feeling a strong conviction as well of their importance, as of their truth ; and arguing with zeal in their defence.

But were we to allow this statement of the case to be just, (which however we cannot do ^f) still no argument could be drawn

^f See Juvenal Sat. xv. b. 33. et seq. Plutarch de Iside et Osiride, Sect. 72. and Dion Cassius, who says, *Θρησκευοσι τε γαρ (Αιγυπτιοι) πολλὰ, περισσοτάτα αἰθρωπων, καὶ πολέμους ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν καὶ πρὸς ἀλλήλους, ἅτε μὴ καδ' ἐν ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐκ τοῦ ἐναντιωτάτου καὶ αὐτοῖς τιμῶντες τινα, ἀναιρουνται.* Ed. Reimari, Vol. i. p. 325. The same historian, relating the advice which Mecænas gave to Augustus, respecting his government, says, that he urged him to preserve inviolate the religion of the country, and to punish those who should make innovations in it : *μη μόνων τῶν θεῶν ἕνεκα, ὧν καταφρονησας οὐδ' ἀλλε αἱ τινος προτιμῆσειεν, ἀλλ' ὅτι καὶ αἱ τινὰ δαιμονία οἱ τοιοῦτοι ἀντισφίροντες, πολλὰς ἀνὰ πειθῶσιν ἀλλοτρίωνται.* Ibid. p. 689.

from it, that would affect the present question. For, as the Heathen did not derive their religious belief from immediate Revelation, they thought themselves under no necessity of adhering rigidly to one inviolable standard. Besides which, they were strangers to the sacredness of the unity of religious worship; and they knew of no obligation which bound them to promote, what is now expressively called “the spiritual welfare of our neighbour.”

In all these points however, an entire revolution was effected by the preaching of Christianity. Mankind were then taught that there was but one God, and that he was jealous of his honour. They were taught also, that there was but *one narrow path leading unto eternal life*^g; that those only could be pronounced blessed, who *should find it*; and finally, that none were to minister about holy things, but those who *should be called to that honour, of God*^h.

It was not possible that this change in the religious sentiments of mankind should not be attended by an equal change in their religious practice also. Instead therefore of wavering, as before, in the tenets which they

^g Matt. vii. 14.

^h Heb. v. 4.

professed, they acknowledged the indispensable necessity of *holding fast the form of sound words*ⁱ. Instead of *offering their sacrifices on every high hill, and under every green tree*^k, they grew to venerate the unity of religious worship, and the sacredness of an appointed ministry. And lastly, instead of being unconcerned when they saw their fellow creatures adopt erroneous opinions in religion, they felt that it would be a criminal neglect of duty, were they not to endeavour, by all the means in their power, to reclaim them to the better way.

Now, these sentiments being once instilled into the minds of men, by the preaching of the Gospel, it seems to follow as a consequence, that their hopes and their fears, their aversions and their desires, would be in many respects no longer the same with what they were previous to its promulgation. We may even venture to say, that the principle whereon virtue was founded, being better understood, the duties which men under the Christian Covenant were called upon to practise, differed from those which had been enforced in the times of Gentilism. Certainly there were many things which the wise and the

ⁱ 2 Tim. i. 13.

^k 1 Kings xiv. 23.

good among the Heathen believed themselves to have been at liberty either to do, or to neglect; which the wise and the good among the Christians now feel themselves compelled in duty either to avoid, or to practise.

Such was the revolution which the diffusion of Christianity wrought in the minds of men, with regard to the motives of their conduct. It must be obvious, that the effect of this revolution would soon be felt by civil government, in the changes which would naturally be introduced by it into men's actions likewise. This accordingly happened. And as it will tend materially to illustrate the subject which is now under consideration, we will specify, in a few instances, what was the nature of those changes which were so produced.

One of these was effected by instilling into the human mind the principle of religious constancy; a principle which may be considered to have been almost unknown to the Heathen. The passion which was most powerful with them, was the love of their country. A firm adherence to religious tenets seems to have had little influence on their conduct. But when it was told the Man of God, that the fidelity with which he should maintain the doctrines of his Divine Master would be a title to an everlasting reward; when too it

was

was revealed to him, *that the souls of them who were slain for the word of God were preserved under the altar, unto endless glory*¹; motives were supplied which excited religious constancy, and made it constitute in future one of the distinguishing marks of the Christian character. Hence it was, that when the persecutions arose, the Romans beheld in the conduct of the martyrs, a firmness, to which they hardly knew how to assign a name. They called it therefore what, having no knowledge of the sacredness of the obligation which bound men to preserve the integrity of the Faith, they really conceived it to be, not constancy, but madness. How then would they have been astonished, could they have foreseen, that, while their Emperors were even praised for uniting in one temple the gods of different countries^m,

¹ Revel. vi. 9. vii. 13, 14.

^m Thus Mr. Gibbon describes Alexander Severus as "having filled his domestic Chapel with the images of *those heroes* who, by improving or reforming human life, had deserved the grateful reverence of posterity." Vol. i. ed. 4to. p. 155. The words of Lampridius, whom Mr. Gibbon translates in part, are: "In larario suo (in quo et Divos Principes, sed optimos electos, et animos sanctiores, in quibus et Apollonium, et quantum scriptor suorum temporum dicit, CHRISTUM, Abraham, Orpheum, et hujusmodi deos habebat, ac majorem effigies) rem divinam faciebat." *Hist. Aug. Script.* Ed. Casauboni, p. 123.

the example of Christian kings would not be wanting, who cheerfully would bow down their heads and die, rather than consent to betray the religious establishment of their kingdoms.

A second change, which was produced by the preaching of Christianity, may be considered to have been, in some respects, even more important than the preceding. Before the Gospel was revealed, Religion, being destitute of all positive authority, was of little or no restraint upon that obedience which the peculiar institutions of any state required of its subjects. Nay, rather, religion became, in the hands of every legislator, precisely that which his policy would make it. Thus in some countries the strongest sentiments of natural affection, or of moral rectitude, were cancelled; and many things were approved of, which by the common law of nature, or of equity, were forbiddenⁿ. So that frequently

ⁿ This was remarkably the case in the Spartan Republic. Nothing, for instance, could have been more repugnant to natural affection than the custom which was there established, of destroying all infants which did not promise to be robust, and healthy. Nothing likewise could have been more directly in opposition to moral rectitude than the practice of encouraging the youth to steal, in order to make them adroit, and enterprising. See many other instances of this nature enumerated by Mitford, History of Greece, Vol. I. c. v. sect. 2.

actions were considered to be good or bad, only so far as they were useful, or detrimental to the state. But the human mind having been once enlightened, and taught, that no part of human conduct could be approved, but as it was the fulfilment of some religious obligation, it was no longer in the power of particular institutions to mould men as they pleased; and it was found, that even the love of their country, which till then was held to be the most sacred of all obligations, was to be in future regulated in subserviency to that obedience which was due to the commands of God.

A third change which was wrought by the propagation of the Gospel will be found to have been of equal importance. For men having now learned the real dignity of their nature, and the effect which their conduct here would produce on their happiness hereafter, boldly asserted, that though the institutions of their own particular state claimed their highest veneration, these were not to be put in competition with the superior sanctity of revealed duty. The memorable instance of the Christian soldier, who, under every punishment, refused to wear the military crown, because he thought the action forbidden by the Christian law, convinced the world that the human mind had acquired a new principle,

ciple, and that henceforward it would be dangerous for any state to exact an obedience that should be contrary to the laws of revealed religion °.

Let these instances be sufficient to prove how great the revolution was which had been effected, as well in the conduct as in the opinions of mankind, by the establishment of Christianity. That this revolution was one which would immediately be felt by Civil governments at large, is obvious. For individuals having obtained, what they had not before, a clear and a just conception of a future and a better existence ; and having once made the acquirement of eternal glory in the heavens, the great object of their desire, each of them would naturally become jealous of his moral conduct. As the number of those should increase, who acted on this principle, Religious institutions, it was evident, would obtain a powerful influence over Civil. Since, as it could not be thought probable that the truly pious Christian would sacrifice his everlasting hopes to his temporal prospects, so it followed, that he would not be brought to concur in any measure in future, which should involve the violation of positive religious duty.

° See Tertullian de Corona Militis, Opera, ed. Rigalt, p. 100.

It is true that the precepts which the Christian Religion taught, were eminently of a nature to produce universal political good. For their direct tendency (and this too strengthened by the express command and the blameless example of the Son of God himself) was to ensure obedience to laws, and reverence to supreme magistrates; was to prevent innovation, and to give to regular governments a lasting stability. It could not but be manifest however, that should those precepts be at any time perverted, then they might operate as powerfully to the subversion of Civil order, as, when properly directed, they would have done to the support of it ^P.

^P It is important to observe, that one of the most fatal prejudices, which were entertained against Christianity, arose from a supposition that the principles which it inculcated were inimical to Civil government. The probable cause of this error was, that the Christians, who were called in the first ages, not unfrequently, Galileans, were confounded with the followers of Judas of Galilee, mentioned Acts v. 37. The tenets of these turbulent sectaries seem to have been; "That they were the servants of the Lord, and therefore owed no subjection to any human creature; that they were the freemen of God, and ought not therefore to be the slaves or the subjects of men." It was owing to this prejudice, that St. Paul was accused before Felix as "a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world; and a ringleader of the sect called Nazarenes;" Acts xxiv. 5; and that, in like manner, the Christians of Thessalonica were charged "with being those who have turned the world upside down." Acts xvii. 6. See this point treated

For be it considered what were the great leading principles with which the minds of men were now impressed! They may be inferred from the following awful declarations of our Divine Master.

What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul^a?

He that denieth me before men, shall be denied before the Angels of God^r.

Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell^s.

Declarations such as these, must naturally have produced on the mind of the believer an impression which no external consideration either of disgrace, of torment, or of death, could counteract. So that should he ever be persuaded that any private and domestic tie, any public and Civil institution stood in the way of that fidelity, which he owed his heavenly Master, he could not hesitate what conduct to pursue. He would violate every obe-

treated of at large by Bp. Sherlock, in his Sermons, vol. iv. Discourse xiii.

^a Mark viii. 36.

^r Luke xii. 9.

^s Matt. x. 28.

dience, rather than infringe that on which he believed his salvation to depend.

Of the powerful operation of such a sentiment as this, the ambitious doubtless would soon be apprised. And if they had any great revolution to effect, their first object would be to engage in their interest such religious sects, as maintained opinions contrary to those which were acknowledged by the established government. They would tell them, that that government was tyrannous over their consciences: they would say, that it was the sole obstacle which prevented the diffusion of their religious opinions; and they would suggest, that the benefits, which would follow the general adoption of their tenets, would more than compensate any temporary evils which might arise from the violation of Civil order[†].

These are the arguments, which the movers of sedition would employ. And they

[†] Dr. Priestley reveals his sentiments on this head, without the least reserve. "Perhaps we must wait for the fall of the civil powers before this most unnatural alliance (between the kingdom of Christ and the kingdoms of this world) be broken. Calamitous, no doubt, will that time be; but what convulsion in the political world ought to be a subject of lamentation, if it be attended with so desirable an event?" *Hist. of the Corruptions*, &c. vol. ii. p. 489.

would urge them with a greater degree of earnestness, because they could not but be sensible that such of their followers, as should join them from worldly considerations, might easily be induced, from change of circumstances, to return to their former obedience; which those, who had rebelled against the ruling powers on principles of religious disagreement, would hardly ever be persuaded to do.

It is not possible perhaps to adduce a stronger illustration of the truth of these remarks, than that which is afforded us by the Scriptures, in the history of the kingdom of Israel.

When Jeroboam had separated the ten tribes from those of Benjamin and Judah, although his government, according to the promise of the Almighty, seemed to be permanently established, nevertheless he feared that the tie of a common worship might ultimately cause his kingdom to return to the house of David. *If my people go up to sacrifice at Jerusalem, he said, their hearts will turn again to Rehoboam.* He therefore persuaded his subjects, that the journey to the Temple was both painful and unnecessary. *It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel^u!* By thus establishing among his own

^u 1 Kings xii. 25. 6, 7, 8. Diodorus Siculus relates, that

people a mode of worship distinct from that of the men of Judah, and by mingling religious with political disunion, he precluded, as he thought, the possibility of a future reconciliation. As no lapse of time, no change of sovereigns, no similarity of interests, and not even the ties of consanguinity were ever able to effect a reunion, we are authorized to conclude, that the principle whereon he founded his reasoning was just; and that dissensions in religion, wherever they shall be violently excited, will induce men to break through every obligation, which either the laws of their country, the charities of social life, or the ties of nature impose.

For we must all of us be conscious that the social principle in the human breast is, generally speaking, so strong and active, that it

one of the kings of Egypt was reported to have followed, on another occasion, a nearly similar line of conduct, to effect nearly a similar end. "The several cities (of Egypt)," he says, "being formerly prone to rebellion, and to enter into conspiracies against monarchical government, one of their kings contrived to introduce into each city the worship of a different animal: so that while every one revered the deity which itself held sacred, and despised what the other consecrated, they could hardly be brought to join cordially together in one common cause against the government." See the passage as preserved by Eusebius, *Præp. Evang.* quoted by Bp. Warburton, *Divine Legation*, Works, 4to. vol. i. p. 433.

recoils,

recoils, as it were instinctively, at the thought of disunion; and that it resists, for a long time, every effort which shall be made to produce it. When therefore a principle, thus powerful in itself, is strengthened by the additional tie of religious unity, it then will lead men to bear patiently, as God mercifully intended that it should, many of those smaller imperfections which must unavoidably be found in human institutions. The very recollection that we have one common hope of salvation, awakens in the mind such a sentiment of mutual endearment and confidence, that we instantly reject the idea of acting in opposition to those who are bound to us in a bond of union so sacred, and so affecting. *Art thou not my companion, my guide, and mine own familiar friend? Do we not take sweet counsel together? Do we not walk in the house of God as friends**? But once change the circumstances, let us suppose that, so far from having the house of God as a common point of union, we consider the temple, where our political enemies worship, to be the place where we dare not in conscience sacrifice: let us suppose that we are once fatally persuaded, that the jealousy with which we are expected to love God, compels us to break

* Psalm. lv. 13, 14.

all religious communion with those from whom we are already inclined to separate, we shall immediately burst asunder every remaining bond of charity; and, by giving the colour of religion to private animosities, we shall never afterwards find any inducement to moderate the acrimony with which they are pursued.

It is apparent then, that the assertion of such as would maintain that the religious dissensions of Christians will not, in the present day, necessarily affect the peace of Civil establishments, is altogether unfounded. And yet further; as we have proved that the evils which will be produced by Schism result immediately from certain fixed principles, which never can be altered, and not from accident, it is manifest that whatever those evils be, they must be of perpetual recurrence.

For be it only considered, what is the nature of religious animosity? a passion, which it has been shewn will unavoidably be excited by Schism. Surely we cannot be ignorant, that it is a passion by far the most powerful, that can agitate the human breast. Hope, fear, jealousy, anger, hatred, and all similar emotions, may be qualified with other sentiments; may be suspended by the intervention of more urgent pursuits; and may finally

nally subside. But religious animosity, if once kindled, is seldom, if ever, extinguished, but in death^y. Firmly impressed with the belief, that the joys of eternity depend upon the measure of their love to God; arguing therefore, that his enemies should be their enemies; but falsely concluding, that those must be such who will not honour him in the way which they believe to be the best; how soon do Schismatics persuade themselves that they cannot, consistently with duty, abate the fierceness of their contention! Luke-warmness appears to them to be a desertion of their heavenly Master's cause; opposition

^y How strongly is this deadly passion characterized in the following passages! An Independent prayed thus publicly in the time of the rebellion: "Lord, now that the sword is drawn, let it never be sheathed, until it be *glutted in the blood of the cursed Malignants.*" *Gangrana*, part iii. p. 17. And after the battle of Worcester, part of the hymn sung at divine service, in a congregation of Independents, was:

"Lord, dip the feet of all thy saints

"I'th' blood of all thy deadly foes."

See a tract called "Unity the Bond of Peace," p. 108. Far different were the prayers of their Sovereign, whom they murdered. "I bless God," he says, "I pray not so much that this bitter cup of a violent death may pass from me, as, that that of his wrath may pass from all those, whose hands, by deserting me, are sprinkled, or by acting and consenting to my death, are embued with my blood." See ΕΙΧΩΝ ΒΑΣΙΛΙΚΗ, King Charles's Works, p. 146.

being

being considered as a trial of their fidelity, serves but to stimulate exertion; and while defeat re-animates their zeal, success is exultingly proclaimed to be the marked approbation of Heaven. Acting under these impressions, how is it possible that the mind should not assume a character of all others the most dangerous to the interests, and the most hostile to the peace of Civil communion?

That such has been, generally speaking, the temper of all those who have either been the authors, or the supporters of religious dissensions, may be clearly inferred from the methods which they have adopted, in order to secure the success of that party to which they are attached. To detail all these methods would be impracticable. Nor in fact does our argument require it. It will be probably thought sufficient to confirm what has been advanced, if we specify in two instances the line of conduct which those, who are bent on maintaining the cause of some particular communion, have been found to pursue.

In the first place then it is observable that they deliberately sacrifice every consideration of public good, rather than permit their religious opponents to gain the least ascendancy. And in the second place, that they

they resort to any means; nay, they have not scrupled even to affirm, that the worst means will be sanctioned when employed to promote, what they conceive to be the interests of their Master's spiritual kingdom.

The former of these positions will receive the strongest confirmation from the circumstances which contributed to the downfall of the Christian Empire in the East. Whether that Empire could have long resisted the repeated assaults which were made upon it, we are not now concerned to enquire. Perhaps, humanly speaking, it would have been subverted, sooner or later, by the arms of a warlike and a victorious enemy. Nevertheless, it seems more than probable, that the Schism between the Eastern and the Western Churches contributed essentially to hasten that event. For what a dreadful instance of the implacability of religious animosity does the history of that period present! On the one hand, the greater part of the Greek Communion declared, that they had rather perish, than owe their safety to the interposition of the Latin Church². And on the other hand, the Roman

² See Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vol. vi. ed. 4to. p. 480—483. where he describes the manner in which all orders of men, of the Greek Church, united in expressing their hatred for the doctrines and ministers of the Church

Pontiff, when solicited, instead of obtaining for his Christian brethren such assistance as might have saved them from the sword of an infidel enemy, took that opportunity to insist on the recognition of his own supremacy, and on the adoption of some disputed points of faith^a. The event of this conduct was such as might have been expected, and was in fact foretold. The general good of society was betrayed; and the Romish Church, in order as it should seem to procure the humiliation of a rival communion, was content (we might almost say) to surrender some of the fairest provinces of Christendom into the hands of the bitterest enemy of the Christian faith.

Of the truth of our second position, namely, that Schismatics, when heated by religious

Church of Rome. The common language was, "What occasion have we for succour, or union, or Latins? far be from us the worship of the Azymites." By which term they described the members of the Roman communion. "The Latins are the most odious of heretics and infidels: I had rather," said the first minister of the empire, "behold in Constantinople the turban of Mahomet, than the Pope's tiara, or the Cardinal's hat."

^a See Gibbon, vol. vi. ed. 4to. p. 413, and 437. Universal Hist. vol. vi. ed. fol. p. 650, and vol. ix. p. 681, 687. Mosheim, Cent. VII. p. ii. chap. ii. sec. 1. and Cent. XI. p. ii. chap. iii. sec. 9.

animosities, will deliberately have recourse to any, nay even to forbidden means, in order to promote the success of their cause, we have the fullest confirmation in the progress of that Rebellion, which was permitted, for a certain space, to destroy in these kingdoms the Civil and the Ecclesiastical Establishments^a.

To dwell on the history of that distressful period, that we may illustrate the truth of the above assertion, cannot be deemed necessary. It has long been universally acknowledged, that when the good and the

^a The History of the illustrious Lord Clarendon has been justly styled *κτῆμα εἰς αἰῶνα*, an everlasting possession. For it so clearly traces the progress of Rebellion; so accurately describes the characters of men, and the influence which religious animosity, the love of power, and the attachment to parties have over the human mind, that, would we consent to be taught by experience, that work alone might prevent the recurrence of Civil discord in future. But it seems always to have been the character of mankind, that they will "not remember the former things, neither consider the things of old." *Isaiab* xliii. 18. The conduct which was pursued by the religious Sectaries of those days, so far at least as it concurred to subvert the established government, is marked out with much precision by Dugdale, in his "View of the late Troubles in England," and by Walker in his "Sufferings of the Clergy during the Grand Rebellion." The account which is given in the latter of what was called, The Propagation of the Gospel in Wales, describes a more tremendous scene of fanaticism and iniquity, than perhaps was ever witnessed in any country before.

dispassion-

dispassionate of the two contending parties wished to draw those mournful differences to a close, they found that what chiefly prevented the success of their endeavours, was the ambition of contending sectaries. These, in their zeal to establish their separate communions, became, not unwillingly, subservient to the designs of other men, whose object was avowedly to overturn the existing form of Civil government^b. This mode of conduct indeed, was repugnant to every principle of that pure Christian faith, of which

^b In no one instance, probably, were the motives which influenced the conduct of the rebels of those times more openly avowed, than by Col. Purefoy, one of the Council of State, who thus expressed himself, after Charles I. was put to death. "I bless God that I have now lived to see the ruin of the Monarchy, and that I have been instrumental to it; for I do acknowledge, that it hath been in my design ever since I was in Geneva, which is now thirty-eight years." See *Dugdale's View*, &c. The public directions given to the ministers in London were as follows: "You are required to commend to God in your prayers, the Lord General; the whole army employed in the Parliament's service; and the design undertaken by them; as also in your sermons effectually to stir up the people to appear in person, and to join with the army to stand up for our Religion, and Liberties." *Dugdale's View*, &c. p. 567.

No sooner however was the great end accomplished, in the murder of the Sovereign, than an order of council was passed, "That no minister, in the pulpit, should meddle with any state matters." *Ibid.* p. 389.

they

they professed themselves to be the followers. But probably the leaders of those Sects reasoned severally within themselves, that, should the new rulers of the state be sensible that they owed the success of their ambitious designs, in part to their co-operation, then, either from policy, or from gratitude, their religious system might be made the national church ^c.

Unless the conduct of some of those sectaries be referred to this motive, it seems hardly possible to account for it on any known principle of reason. That needy, and uninformed, and seditious people might have been led, from worldly considerations, to contribute

^c The writers of those days seem to agree in charging the Independents with being, in great measure, the cause of all the evils which were experienced during the rebellion. "In a word, we may thank Independency and Independents, for all these errors, heresies, blasphemies, and other evils in our Church; as being the cause of their rise, growth, increase, and continuance among us: and I do here, as a Minister of Jesus Christ, charge upon the consciences of the Independents, all the confusions and mischiefs we lie under; as being the great means of hindering, and delaying, the settling of Church Government, keeping all things loose, strengthening the hands of the Sectaries, standing up for them in all places, bringing them off danger, and constantly opposing all ways propounded for the suppressing of them; being content that God's Glory, Name, and Truth should suffer, rather than that their interests and way should be in the least kind prejudiced." *Edwards' Gangræna*, P. i. p. 161, and 157. And see Walker's History of Independency.

by every means in their power to the success of an usurper, was no more than it was natural to expect. But when we find men of superior talents and learning, and even of personal sanctity of life, urging the extirpation of adverse parties, as of the enemies of God; exulting in a strain of bitter triumph over the murder of their Sovereign; promising the blessing of the Almighty to those who should prosecute the work of rebellion; and denouncing the terrors of God's severest vengeance against all who were not even zealous in that undertaking; how, may we ask, are such declarations reconcileable with their Christian sincerity in other respects? So great an inconsistency can be accounted for only by supposing, that having persuaded themselves that the interest of the Church of Christ depended upon the establishment of their peculiar religious systems, they argued that they should be justified in the employment of any means, however violent, by which that great end might be accomplished. ^d

^d See the Sermon preached by Dr. J. Owen, before the Parliament the day after the murder of his Sovereign, and his Sermon on the defeat of Charles II. at the battle of Worcester. Of Dr. Owen's Treatises several are written in a strain of true piety: but as the principles which he held, and publicly defended in many of them, with all the powers of his understanding and great learning, are destructive both of our Civil and

We see then that Schisms have that immediate tendency to destroy the peace of Civil society, which we have attributed to them ; whether we consider the nature of those passions which they will excite in the minds of individuals ; or whether we consider the methods which the authors and the supporters of religious dissensions pursue, in order to secure the success of their particular communions ^e.

Ecclesiastical Establishments, it may be asked, what good is to be derived from their intended republication ? For an account of this dangerous Schismatic, who was called the “ Apostle of the Independents,” see *Wood's Athens Oxonienses*, vol. ii. p. 555.

^e The conduct which the Socinians of this country once adopted, affords another striking confirmation of this position, For in the reign of Charles II. they addressed the Emperor of Morocco, through his Ambassador ; and, in the hope of making him friendly to their cause, they declared, that in important points they approached nearer to the Mahometan Religion than all the other Protestants. They not only undertake to prove that all the inconsistencies which are to be found in their Coran, were not the real sayings of their Prophet ; but they offer their assistance to restore the Coran to its first purity : and they declare that Mahomet was but a preacher of Christ. They acknowledge that their sect dares not speak out as openly as they could wish, “ by reason of the inhumanity of the Clergy :” and they assign this as the “ sad reason, why they had not hitherto waited on the Ambassador in greater numbers, to testify the respect they bore to his Prince, and people.” See *Leslie's Works*, vol. i. p. 205 ; where the address is preserved. The Socinians grounded their hopes of success on knowing that the Mahometans glory in calling themselves

The only objection, perhaps, that can be urged to invalidate the force of this latter conclusion, is this : That all Schismatics must now be so convinced, from the experience of past times, of the fatal tendency which Schism has to produce Civil discord, that they will be cautious of urging their pretensions in any manner that may affect the peace of society.

However plausible this reasoning may appear, let it not be thought invidious to suggest, in the words of him who was the wisest of the sons of men, “ *That that which hath been is now ; and that which is to be hath already been.*” Wherefore, to urge his own conclusion, “ *God requireth us to consider what is past*”^f.

In fact, so little is mankind disposed to profit by past experience, that it is observable that the Schismatic of the present day,

“ the stoutest of the Unitarians.” *Ockley's Hist. of Saracens*, vol. i. p. 267. That the Roman Catholic Church has at all times encouraged those fanatical Schismatics, who have distracted our communion, in the hope of being able thereby ultimately to subvert it, is a fact, which seems to be established on the clearest evidence. See Leslie's Works, vol. ii. p. 94. 560. Sir James Ware's Foxes and Firebrands, P. I. p. 7. Bp. Stillingfleet's Works, vol. ii. p. 443. Hist. of Mod. Enthusiasm, p. 32. and 80. and Grey's Examination of Neal's Hist. of the Puritans, vol. i. p. 90. et seq.

^f Eccles. iii. 15.

instead of cautiously endeavouring, if it were possible, to separate Civil from Religious innovation, seems to be studiously bent on connecting them.

What, for instance, can be more unequivocal than the conduct and words of one of our modern Separatists? Solemnly addressing the Almighty in prayer, and beseeching him to bless his endeavours with success^g, he proposes to instruct the younger part of his congregation, in the following principles: “That
“ the study of religion is naturally connected
“ with the study of government—that its
“ administrators are responsible trustees—
“ that the people are the origin of power—
“ and that free popular election is a necessary
“ qualification to enable the chief magistrate
“ to govern^h.”

^g Plan of Lectures on the Principles of Non-conformity, p. 56.

^h Ibid. p. 49. and 36. These lectures conclude with affirming, “ that Monarchy *would stand safer* without the incumbrance of
“ Episcopacy: and that till its entire abolition is effected, the
“ servants of Christ must prophesy in sackcloth.” p. 55. The sentiments of Dr. Price are expressed still more explicitly.
“ Tremble, ye oppressors of the world! Take warning, all ye
“ supporters of *slavish Governments*, and *slavish Hierarchies*;
“ call no more (absurdly and wickedly) Reformation, Innovation. You cannot hold the world in darkness. Struggle
“ no more against increasing light and *liberality*. Restore to
“ mankind their rights, and consent to the correction of
“ abuses,

More declarations of this nature, if possible, still clearer in their object, might easily be adduced, to shew the tendency of those opinions, which are professed and propagated by our modern Sectaries. The above will be sufficient to prove (which is the only point we wish to establish) that there is little hope that those who violate the peace of the Church, will either long themselves respect, or be able to teach others to respect, the peace of Civil society. For let themselves decide the question.

Has not the blessed Jesus, whom under every title we are bound to love and to obey, whether as Creator, or Redeemer ; as Mediator, or as Judge ; has He not, I say, both commanded us and intreated us to preserve the unity of his Church entire ? And if, notwithstanding this, we can persuade ourselves, that, upon the suggestions of our vain imaginations, we are at liberty to violate that unity ; is it probable that we shall persuade ourselves not to violate the unity of Civil governments ? which have, it will be argued, a far less positive claim upon us for an unvarying obedience. He that disregards the greater,

" abuses, before they and you are destroyed together." See Sermon preached on the Anniversary of the Revolution. Nov. 4, 1789.

will

will he reverence the less? Surely there can be but one conclusion. So that, reflecting on the several particulars which have been adduced, I see not how we can avoid acknowledging that Schism will of necessity operate to weaken, and, as circumstances shall decide, sometimes even to dissolve, the bonds of Civil unionⁱ.

ⁱ “ Grant us *vox populi, vox Dei*; only allow the people to be the source of power, and we have a wish equal to that of Archimedes, and as much more glorious, as the dignity of directing the world of spirit is superior to that of guiding the motion of matter. Farewell popery, prelacy, presbytery; I have understanding as well as you.” *Methodist Monitor*, vol. ii. p. 290. When the minds of Separatists are inflamed with these sentiments; and when they openly profess to wish for the attainment of these objects; how is it possible that they should not become sometimes the very cause, and most commonly the supporters of dissensions in the State? The truly pious indeed of every Sect will not deliberately engage in any undertaking that shall be destructive of the public good. At least they propose to themselves that they will not. But it is a dangerous thing to put the duties which we owe the State in competition with those which we shall persuade ourselves we owe God. At all events, how easily may even well-intentioned Sectaries become instruments in the hands of artful men; and how often have they been made subservient to the worst of purposes, while they are intent solely on promoting the interests of their communion! Thus in the recent attempt which was made to extirpate Christianity in these dominions, many of our Sectaries were brought, unknowingly to themselves, to co-operate in the horrid undertaking: “ It was a dreadful aggravation of the dangers of that crisis,” says an eminent writer,

This point then being established, it now remains for us to consider the other position which we proposed to examine; and enquire, Whether Schisms do not tend equally to injure domestic peace; and to destroy that mutual affection which ought to subsist in the several relations of life.

These effects indeed are so unavoidably connected with those which we have already proved to be the certain consequents of Religious disunion, that it might seem unnecessary to make them the object of a separate consideration. And so it would, were men at all times sincere in their enquiries after truth. But there are some who appear constantly disposed to represent the evils which arise from Schism, to be less than they really are; hoping perhaps by this method to palliate the sinfulness of their own conduct. These therefore contend, that, though dissensions in

“that persons of real piety should, without knowing it, be
 “lending their aid to the common enemy, and making them-
 “selves in effect accomplices in a conspiracy against the Lord,
 “and against his Christ.” *Bp. of Rochester's Charge*, 1800, p. 20. The evidences that support this assertion are, I believe, incontestable. See *Methodism Unmasked*, p. 55. et seq. How then can Schismatics be certain that they may not be made to contribute, even though their intentions should be remote from such a design, at any future period, to the subversion of civil order?

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the Church have been followed, in former instances, by all those fatal consequences which we have detailed ; nevertheless there is reason to suppose that in the present times they will not be attended by similar effects.

Now with respect to this argument, we would observe, that it is precisely the same with that which has been urged on another occasion, and with a similar design, against the probability of the recurrence of religious imposture. The answer is the same. No one can ever be justified in adopting a principle of action which has a certain tendency to produce any given evil, upon the presumption that that evil will not occur. Even could it be ascertained that such a particular effect would not be produced, yet if it can be shewn that other hurtful consequences will follow, this of itself forms a sufficient reason why the principle should be rejected.

We will grant then, (what we are so willing to believe true) that several causes concur so far to restrain the violence of Schism, that it will not produce in our days the same tremendous consequences which were witnessed in a former age. What then ? Are there not still many intermediate evils, which may be created by it, of sufficient magnitude to occasion the most fearful apprehensions ?

Certainly

Certainly there are ! And, in proof of this, we will shew in what manner religious dissensions, even though they should not excite rebellions, and produce the subversion of governments, will nevertheless destroy the happiness of individuals, and the tranquillity of domestic life.

The First way in which this will be effected is, by introducing discord into families, so as to extinguish that affection which unites mankind together in the several degrees of natural relationship.

And here we would remark, that this effect will be produced, not only among such as are connected by distant alliance, but among those particularly who are bound to one another by the nearest and the most endearing ties. For it may be observed, that in every dispute, the degree of bitterness with which it is conducted generally depends on the degree of love which before existed between the contending parties. Therefore, when the wife, the daughter, or the son, shall have unhappily embraced a Sect that is disapproved of by the husband, the mother, or the father ; all, trembling with a more exceeding anxiety for the eternal welfare of those who are most dear to them, will by turns argue and expostulate, will threaten and solicit with more
than

than common zeal and importunity. Should these means fail of success, this will but serve the more sensibly to irritate their minds. Then will follow suspicion, and the decay of reciprocal confidence; reproaches for the want of duty, or affection; and soon even the bitterness of hatred, aggravated by the memory of former attachment, will ensue. Nor will even this be the whole extent of the evil. For both parties remembering that it is said, that even a *right-hand should be cut off, or a right eye plucked out*^k, should these prove to be causes of offence; will mutually conceive it to be their duty to shut their hearts against every return of natural affection. They will even glory in making the sacrifice of their earthly love notorious in the sight of the world, that thus they may manifest the reality of what they unhappily consider to be their love to God^l.

A Second effect which will be produced

^k Mark ix. 47.

^l In the Hist. of Modern Enthusiasm is adduced one instance (among many others) of a young girl, who, being made a convert to Methodism, told her father, "She could see the image of the Devil in his face; and that all the prayers he ever made in his family were nothing but abomination in the ears of the Almighty." P. 114.

by Schism, destructive of domestic peace, is the exciting of a spirit of profelytism.

That there is a spirit, by which men are led to gain converts to their own peculiar opinions, distinct from that by which they are required to spread the Gospel of our blessed Lord, is clearly pointed out to us in Scripture ^m. And the difference between the two appears to be this. That in the latter case, though we are to be instant *both in season and out of season; in rebuking and exhorting; and in preaching the wordⁿ*; and though we are not to *regard the face of man*, so as to desist from any known positive duty, through fear or worldly-mindedness; still we are to regulate our conduct by the perfect law of charity. Thus, being commanded to seek the peace of all, we are to address ourselves to all alike; and considering that the several orders of men form but one family, redeemed by the atoning blood of a merciful Saviour, we are to teach that all, as partakers of his promises, may, if they keep his covenants, obtain an equal share in the riches of his grace ^o.

^m Matt. xxiii. 15.

ⁿ 2 Tim. iv. 2.

^o The language which Schismatics employ, to gain the poorer

But the spirit of *Profelytism*, *compassing as it were sea and land*, in order to add one to the number of a religious party, addresses those chiefly who are the least able to discriminate between the doctrines which they are solicited to embrace, and those which they are commanded to abandon ! It pre-occupies the

poorer sort of people to their cause, is uniformly the same : they tell them that they are the excellent of the earth ; Saints, and the highly favoured of Heaven. The following words, as applied by Mr. Whitefield, are in the highest degree improper. Exhorting a friend to persevere in the cause, and bidding him “ rejoice that “ he was called to be a martyr, a living martyr, for their common “ Lord,” he adds, “ I thank thee, Holy Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise “ and prudent, and revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, “ for so it seemeth good in thy sight. Why me, Lord ? why “ me ?” *Lett.* 1361. Perhaps a more uncharitable, a more presumptuous sentiment was never pronounced by man. When the words which Mr. Whitefield ventured to apply to himself, fell from the mouth of the Son of God, we know that they must have been dictated by unerring wisdom, and perfect love. If then they appear to us at first to be *an hard speech*, we nevertheless humbly acquiesce in the propriety of what was said, because we know that *God seeth not, as man seeth !* But if Mr. Whitefield really believed that his doctrines were necessary to salvation, did it become him to rejoice, that they were rejected by the wise and prudent ? *Was this the Charity that suffereth long, and is kind ; that rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth ?* How far more becoming was the example of the Prophet of old ! “ Hear ye, and give ear ; be not proud ! But if ye will “ not hear, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride, “ and mine eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears.” *Jeremiah xiii.* 15, 17.

judgment of the young with partial notions concerning the power and the duties of religion^p: it dictates to the ignorant, in an arbitrary and imposing manner, the measure of their faith^q: it allures the fickle-minded with pleasing ceremonies, or awful and mysterious rites^r: it terrifies the weak with the

^p In the report of the Missionary Society, vol. ii. p. 18. it is the subject of *their boast*, “that an *host* of faithful labourers had arisen from those who form the Missionary Society, and are going forth continually in their several neighbourhoods, preaching the Gospel to the poor, and *teaching their children*.” The expence incurred by doing this is defrayed by a Society, whose professed object it is “to encourage Ministers to extend their labours *to dark villages and towns* ;” see a Tract called “Unity the Bond of Peace,” p. 133. et seq. For an account of an institution established by Mr. Wesley, for the reception and instruction of young persons of all descriptions, see Gent. Mag. vol. xi. p. 320. Mr. Whitefield often mentions with much complacency the effects which he produced by his preaching on little children; see Third Journal, p. 36. and 57. and records one from among many similar instances, “of a child *about seven years old*, to whom the Lord revealed himself in an amazing manner; and who in a rapture was enabled to *wrestle for the Churches*.” *Bp. Lavington*, Vol. I. part ii. p. 41.

^q See note i. p. 336.

^r Mr. Whitefield with great propriety exposes and reprobates the childish and unscriptural (he might have added impious) arts which Count Zinzendorff employed to amuse and delude the minds of his followers. See Whitefield's Works, vol. iv. p. 253. But may not both Mr. Whitefield and Mr. Wesley be condemned for their Love-Fests and Watch-Nights? When we consider the novelty of these rites; the mysterious manner

curſes of *Meroz*, if they come not to the help of the Lord^s: and it privily creeps into houſes, leading captive ſilly women, laden with ſins, and led away with divers luſts^t. It is obvious that this mode of conduct cannot but eſſentially affect the domeſtic peace and happineſs of mankind. For thus the poor, and thoſe of low condition, being perſuaded that they alone are the *juſt of the earth*, will be taught to conſider the rich, and the higher orders of ſociety, as objects of divine anger, and rejection. Thus likewiſe, the young and ignorant will regard the experienced and learned as *false guides, deceivers of the people, having their eyes blinded, that they ſhould not ſee the truth*. And thus finally, the heads and governors of families, being but too often conſidered by their dependants as ſtrangers to the ſuperior privileges of the Goſpel, *the eye*

manner in which they were to be conducted; and the time (the dead of the night) in which they were to be obſerved; we cannot but conjecture, that the circumſtances connected with theſe inſtitutions were purpoſely deviſed, for the ſake of making a ſtronger impreſſion upon the minds of converts. On other occaſions the Governors of this Sect have reſorted to impoſing ceremonies, in order to awe and terrify the mind. See the account given by Mr. Kilham of the manner in which he was expelled from the Society.

^s Judges v. 23.

^t 2 Tim. iii. 6.

of the servant will no longer look unto the hand of his master, nor the eye of the maiden unto the hand of her mistress^u; but both will be impressed with the fatal opinion, that they are serving in the house of the enemies of their Lord^x.

A Third effect which will be produced destructive of domestic peace is, that thus ambitious thoughts will be excited in the minds of the lower classes of society.

For we must not forget that the human heart is in all men the same; that it is susceptible of the same passions, that it is solicited by the same desires, and will be affected by the same hopes. It therefore has always been considered to be one of the peculiar blessings attached to the low estate of the poor, that their very condition, denying them the probable means of success, prevents them from forming ambitious projects. But when they shall have been taught, that by means

^u Psalm cxxiii. 2.

^x A Presbyterian Minister in America relates, that this effect was produced, and felt sensibly there, upon the dissemination of Methodism. For he says, "As soon as any one became a disciple, he immediately seemed to be filled with a censoring spirit; children against their parents, and servants against their masters, declaring them to be hypocrites, and heirs of eternal damnation." *Hist. of Modern Enthus.* p. 114.

of Schism they can obtain power, and authority, and pre-eminence over those who shall receive them as the Founders, or the Ministers of new Communions, it is manifest, that those ambitious thoughts, which otherwise would not have been excited, will be present to their minds. They then will become *beady, high-minded, presumptuous, and self-willed*; and being no longer able to content them-

y 2 Pet. ii. 10. It is probably owing to this cause principally, that it has always been one of the characteristics of Schism, "that Priests are made of the lowest of the people." 1 Kings xii. 31. xiii. 33. That this was the case at the time of the Rebellion, is too notorious to require proof. In the present day, the Itinerant Preachers of the Methodist Societies are, in an alarming proportion, such as have been taken from the lowest orders of society; persons who have exercised the very meanest employments; and consequently have been brought up in all the ignorance which is unhappily attached to a state of poverty and dependance. See *Methodism Unmasked*, p. 62. Mr. Wesley foresaw this evil, and probably wished, if he could, to have prevented it. When therefore he first heard that Mr. Maxfield, a layman, had assumed the office of Preacher, he endeavoured to put a stop to his acting thus. But his mother prevented him, saying, "Take care what you do with respect to that young man; he is *as assuredly called of God to preach, as you are*." Examine what "have been the fruits of his preaching." As this was the great argument by which Mr. W. supported his own pretensions, he could make no reply; but, it is added, that he only *submitted with reluctance*. Coke's Life, p. 220. Mr. Maxfield soon after separated from Mr. Wesley, and formed a congregation of his own.

selves in that state, wherein the good Providence of God has placed them, they will find the allotted duties of their station irksome, and will soon neglect them.

A Fourth effect will be, that thus the sacred and near tie of relation, which ought for ever to subsist between the regular Minister and the appointed congregation, will be, generally speaking, weakened, and often dissolved ².

For it cannot but be observed that Schismatics uniformly censure the Ministry of the Established Church, in such a manner as takes from them that respect, which is necessary to enable them, not only to maintain successful-

² See this point treated of at length in Norris on Conventicles, p. 239. et seq. There is perhaps no one part of Mr. Wesley's conduct so justly reprehensible, as the following. His avowed object in establishing his societies in any parish was, to call the regular Minister to a sense of his duty; and consequently, when the end was answered, he was to withdraw his interference. Some Clergymen, who were such zealous advocates for Mr. W.'s principles, that they even attended the conferences of the meeting, sensible of the inconvenience attendant upon Mr. W.'s interference, desired him to give up the societies, which he had formed in their respective parishes, to their care. This he refused to do; and his plea was, that he could not do it, and preserve a conscience void of offence towards God and man. See Coke's Life of Wesley, p. 311. et seq. Mr. W.'s letter on the occasion is there preserved. It is well deserving attention.

ly the cause of their Communion, but even to do good in their Social and Civil capacities. Thus, they represent them to be worldly minded, insincere, sinners against their own souls, and wilful abettors of a tyrannous and corrupt system, for the sake of private interests, and temporal aggrandizement². This

² Mr. Whitefield explicitly declares, "If I want to convince Church of England Protestants, I must prove, that the generality of their teachers do not preach, or live up to, the truth as it is in Jesus. Perhaps this may cost me my life: but what have I to do with that?" *Fifth Journal*, p. 32. It is hardly necessary to add, that both Mr. Wesley and Mr. Whitefield adhered invariably to this line of conduct. See Bp. Lavington Enthuf. &c. vol. i. part i. p. 15. and Hampson's Life of Wesley, vol. ii. p. 181. See also note h. to p. 207. Nor are the modern advocates for their opinions less active in their defamation of the established Ministry. Mr. Pawson, addressing the Methodist society at Leeds, says, (speaking of the generality of the Clergy of the Church of England,) "deceived himself, he *tries* to deceive all who hear him, till, without a miracle of mercy, both he and they fall headlong into the pit of endless destruction. Highwaymen and murderers are innocent in comparison of them." Then, having suggested that the Jewish nation was totally ruined, because they did not put false Prophets to death, as was commanded; (Deut. xiii. 5.) he declares, "that it will be an *happy time*, when the fathers and mothers of such monsters shall thrust them through with a dart, in the name of the Lord." The manner in which Mr. Rowland Hill opposes the ministry is more systematic, and more likely to do mischief. He says, "that throughout a tour he made to Scotland, he almost universally, after every sermon, went preaching up what they (the clergy) had been just before crying down:" and he adds, "that it was scarcely pos-

language will no doubt render the regular Minister contemptible in the eyes of such as shall withdraw themselves from his charge, and will therefore deprive him of that authority, which might otherwise enable him to bring back the wanderers to the fold of Christ. But it should also be considered, that the same censures will have weight with many, who yet continuing within the pale of the Church, require to be controuled by the authority, and directed by the counsels of their spiritual pastor. If he then shall appear to them to be the priest of *Baal*, rather than of God; to be the corrupter, not the dispenser of, *the words of everlasting life*, how shall he be heard, when he would speak *consolation to the broken-hearted*? how shall he be heeded, when he would talk of *the things that belong unto peace*? or how obeyed, when, *knowing the terror of the Lord*, he would bid men flee from *fleshly lusts*, and turn unto the living God ^a?

But why should we enumerate particu-

“sible to tell the general delight and approbation of the people, on these occasions.—” See *Second Tour by R. Hill*, p. 34.

^a Though Mr. Whitefield confidently accuses many of the established Clergy of offences of the most serious nature; yet he has been proved in one instance to have been guilty of deliberate falsehood, and prevarication. Thus he says, “At the inn where we put up, there was an unhappy Clergyman, who (so far had his corruptions dominion over him) would not

“go

lars? Alas! the time would fail us, were we to detail the several bad effects, which the prevalence of Schism will produce upon the minds of men, destructive of domestic union and tranquillity. It introduces a general spirit of insubordination; it destroys humility, and charity, and brotherly love; it inspires self-sufficiency; it persuades the ignorant to set themselves up as confident judges in those points, on which they must be incompetent to decide; it destroys all reverence for those whom we are commanded to revere; and, by an immediate connection, it subverts every principle by which alone the course of this world can be peaceably ordered. For let us figure to ourselves a state, the several orders of which shall have ceased to regard one another with mutual confidence and affection. Let us suppose that the parent, and the child; the husband, and the wife; the master, and

“go over in the passage-boat, because I went in it. Alas! “thought I, this very temper would make heaven itself unpleasant to that man, if he saw me there.” He then adds, “that he saw the same clergyman in a public kitchen shaking “his elbows over a gaming table.” *Third Journal*, p 46. The gentleman however, who was charged with two such heavy accusations, proved that Mr. W. knew at the very time that he made them, that the former was a deliberate falsehood; and that the latter was a complication of untruth and wilful misrepresentation. See *Gent. Mag.* vol. ix. p. 427.

the servant ; the minister, and the congregation ; having no longer the great tie of *one common faith*, and *one common worship*, shall consider each other mutually as apostates, and revilers of the truth ; how is it possible, that that state should not be filled with *envying, and strife, with confusion, and every evil work*^b ?

And now having shewn on what good grounds we ventured to assert, that the natural tendency of Schism was to dissolve the bond of social union : First, by exciting public dissensions ; and Secondly, by destroying the harmony and happiness of domestic life ; we turn once more to the Schismatic and the Enthusiast. The question we would ask them is an obvious one. Can they believe, that, as rational beings, they are justified in this world, in violating the unity of the Church of Christ at the hazard, we might rather say, at the certainty, of doing so much injury to society in general ? Can they suppose, that, as responsible beings, they will not be made accountable, in an high degree, for all those evils which they will have in fact occasioned ?

It has however been constantly urged by Schismatics, and particularly by those who are Enthusiasts, that they must deliver their

^b James iii. 16.

own souls, by preaching what they conceive to be the truth ; and they confidently adduce the example of the Apostles, to justify their conduct.

To the latter of these suggestions we would reply, that nothing is more erroneous, or unbecoming, than to act as if we were permitted to do what the chosen servants of our blessed Lord were commanded to do, in their sacred and peculiar character of Apostles. In the integrity of their lives, in the purity of their faith, and in the blamelessness of their obedience, they are indeed examples for our imitation. But were we to believe, that we might imitate them in other particulars, we should often be led to form such conclusions, as could not be defended on any principle of reason, or religion. For, to mention no other instance, the Apostles were endued with *the Holy Ghost, and with power*, in order to found one pure Catholic Church, the unity of which was afterwards to be preserved, by a positive and inviolable command from God, for ever. When therefore the Enthusiast would assert, that he is permitted to imitate the example of the Apostles in founding new churches, the very statement of the case proves him to assert a perfect inconsistency ; an inconsistency indeed of such a magnitude, that it must be

a matter of surprise, that the mind, under any circumstances of delusion, could have been insensible to it ^d.

With respect to their other position, by which they would maintain that the sacred law of Conscience compels them to deliver what they believe to be the truth ; we would observe, that this opinion, unless it be properly moderated, must be productive of many serious evils. Surely no one can deny that it is not the strength merely of any conviction, which justifies us in making it the rule and the measure of our conduct ; it is the propriety of the conviction alone, which ought to be considered. The whole of this enquiry admits that the Enthusiast is sincere in believing that he has received a divine

^b The language which Mr. Whitefield uses, though it proceeded no doubt from the warmth of his zeal, is strongly descriptive of Enthusiasm. " Methinks going thus from place " to place with my friends, somewhat resembles the Patriarch " Abraham's frequent removes, when called to leave his kindred and his native country. Oh that, like him, we may " erect an altar for God, whithersoever we go !" *Fifth Journal*, p. 27. It ought to be suggested to all Enthusiasts in general, that, when they represent themselves as acting like the Prophets of old, they would do well to remember, that those Prophets were sent *not to build new altars*, but to *repair those which were broken down*. Thus Elijah acted ; see 1 Kings, xviii. 30. And yet we have heard Mr. Whitefield assert, that a double portion of Elijah's spirit rested upon him. See note to p. 282.

commiffion. Do we then, therefore, allow that he is juftified in the conduct which he adopts? So far from it, that our object has been to fhew him that his conduct is finful; and that for this very reafon; becaufe he has the means of difcovering that the belief which he entertains is ill founded. Were we not to infift on this point, what diftinction could we make between a Fanatic, who by a wilful abufe of his underftanding fhould perfuade himfelf confidently to teach certain doctrines as true, which were in reality falfe; and thofe holy Apoftles, who having afcertained by infallible evidence the reality of the revelations which they had received, preached with all boldnefs the unerring word of truth?

When therefore the Enthuſiaſt pleads his Conſcience, as the reafon why he purſues a line of conduct which he never would have purſued, had he not ſubjected his underſtanding to the dominion of his fancy; he evidently betrays an ignorance as to the real nature of that Conſcience, by which he means to regulate his actions. But as this obſervation belongs to that part of the ſubject with the examination of which we propoſed to terminate the whole of this enquiry, it ſhall be deferred to the enſuing lecture.

In

In the mean time we will urge one general reflection.

If the experience of past ages, and the admonitions of Scripture, are not of avail to deter us from adopting a conduct, which always has been attended with calamitous consequences ; when those consequences shall recur, may we not have reason to fear that the very circumstance of our having neglected such repeated warnings, will contribute to heighten our distress ?

Certainly should the dreadful picture of the enormities which were committed in Israel, when every *man did that which was right in his own eyes**, fail to convince us, that national happiness depends on the reverence which is paid to established laws : should the policy of the rebellious Jeroboam be insufficient to prove to us, that ambitious men will employ religious dissensions, as the surest mode of breaking the bonds of Civil Union : should the fate of the ten Schismatic Tribes, always harassed by wars, then carried away into captivity, and finally lost in the dispersion, seem too little to convince the wilful Separatist that his cause is not espoused of Heaven : or, finally, should the bitter spirit

* Judges xvii. 6. xxi. 25.

that subsisted between Samaria and Jerusalem, leave us unimpressed with this important truth, that religious animosities are the most deadly when excited, and the most durable in their effects ; we then cannot but expect to suffer ; and perhaps every calamity, which stamped the bloody characters of Civil discord and contention on the annals of times past, may in some future period again fill the sad records of history, *within and without, with lamentation, and mourning, and woe*^d.

This however is not the only circumstance to which we ought to attend. For let us ask ourselves, whether a wilful inattention to those events, which have been recorded in Scripture for our example, may not merit the severe anger of the Lord ; and consequently, whether the misfortunes which shall ensue may not be considered to be just judgments, executed against us, for having refused to profit by that *good gift of God*, which was designed to teach us the *things which belong unto our peace*.

Bitter indeed then must the spirit of that Enthusiast be, who, knowing the consequences which may ensue, shall nevertheless persist in urging his unfounded pretensions. Should

^d Ezekiel ii. 10.

however such be found, the faithful Steward in the household of Christ will readily perceive what is the conduct which he is bound to pursue. Convinced that the Almighty never permits national disunion, but for the sake of national and individual chastisement; knowing also that even temporal peace is a pledge of divine approbation; he will consider it to be his bounden duty towards both his fellow creatures and himself, to expose the dangerous tendency of Schism, by every argument that reason and religion can suggest; hoping that he may be counted as one who *in these things serveth Christ, acceptable to God, and approved of men,*^g when, *in the way* established in our venerable Church, he exhorts his brethren, *so to worship the God of their Fathers*^h.

^g Romans xiv. 18.

^h Acts xxiv. 14.

SERMON VIII.

ACTS xxiv. 16.

HEREIN DO I EXERCISE MYSELF, TO HAVE
ALWAYS A CONSCIENCE VOID OF OFFENCE
TOWARD GOD, AND TOWARD MEN.

WE proved in our preceding Lecture, that the injury arising to Society from the increase of Schism was both great and inevitable; and we urged in consequence, that this consideration ought to operate as a restraint upon the innovating Spirit of Enthusiasts and Sectaries. But to this it was objected, that their conviction of the propriety of their conduct is so strong, that they cannot conscientiously act otherwise: and it was suggested, that any restraint in this particular would be an injury to that Liberty of Conscience which all men are permitted to exercise.

To this we replied, that they who argue thus, afford much reason to suspect that, if
they

they do not wilfully abuse, they at least entirely misunderstand the nature of that principle, by which they mean to regulate their actions.

Here then we resume the question : and we have to ascertain ; Whether the sacred plea of Conscience can with propriety be urged by those, who having persuaded themselves, by the force of mere imagination, that they have received an authority, which in fact they have not received, shall in consequence proceed to violate the unity of the Church, by the establishment of new Communions ; and to injure the purity of the Faith, by the propagation of erroneous doctrines.

This is the point which is now to be considered. And we undertake the examination of it so much the more willingly, because it will be necessary, in order to promote the success of our general design, that we should form a just conception of the nature and offices of Conscience. In fact, when we shall proceed to urge those several conclusions which we have obtained in the course of our enquiry, for the conviction of the Enthusiast ; the means of producing that conviction will depend, in great measure, upon the admission of this truth : That as the decisions of Conscience,

science, if they are erroneous, will unavoidably lead men into evil, so there must be cases, in which Conscience cannot be considered as a sufficient, or even as a proper guide of conduct.

In order to establish the justness of these positions, we will begin by explaining what the nature of that Conscience is, to the unlimited exercise of which such imperious claims are made; and we will shew that much misconception is entertained concerning the principle itself, on which it is supposed to be founded. We then will endeavour to point out what is the principle on which it does depend: and afterwards we hope that we may be able to demonstrate, that Liberty of Conscience is, strictly speaking, but little connected with those points, which form the immediate subject of our present investigation.

In the first place then respecting Conscience in general, we would observe, that it is by no means what some imagine it to be, a sentiment which relates to ourselves alone. It rather is a principle by which we are taken from our own selves, and are made to consider human conduct as connected with various important and external obligations. Wherefore we should be guilty of great error,
were

were we either in the First place to argue, that we satisfy the Law of Conscience by following our own peculiar conceptions of right and wrong: or, Secondly, were we to conclude, that the pleasure, which we derive from having acted accordingly, is a proof of the propriety of our conduct.

Nevertheless, these are the very errors into which, perhaps without any exception, all Enthusiasts have been betrayed. For arguing that their Conscience is to be a law unto themselves, they view it in this light so exclusively, that they appear never to have enquired, whether it may not be a law which has reference to others also. So that, instead of connecting it with social duties, instead of making it a principle of Christian regard to the happiness of their neighbour, they render it a consideration altogether personal, and selfish.

On the evils resulting from this misconception of the nature of Conscience, we need not here insist. We have only to remark, that the fallacy of it may be plainly inferred from that declaration of the Apostle, which forms the text.

St. Paul is there asserting, in the presence of his accusers, the blamelessness of his conduct. And we may observe, that though he
grounds

grounds his defence on this very circumstance, that he has a *Conscience void of offence*; nevertheless he does not appeal in proof of this to the fidelity merely, with which he adhered to his own private convictions. On the contrary, he declares, that he had cautiously avoided the very irregularities which had been laid to his charge. He had maintained indeed the *Resurrection of the Dead*, because he had received a divine commission for that purpose. Yet even in doing this, he had never violated the institutions, or the customs of his country. *He had been up to Jerusalem to worship; he had neither disputed in the Temple with any man; nor raised up the people, neither in the synagogues, nor in the city^a.*

From the conduct therefore, and from the words of the Apostle we infer, that it is not the bare adherence to the letter of our duties alone, which will entitle us to the claim of a *Conscience void of offence*. Something more is required. It is necessary that, even in the performance of those duties, we should pay the utmost regard to every particular which may affect either the welfare of society, or the happiness of individuals.

^a Acts xxiv. 11, 12.

For let it be supposed, that the great Apostle himself had taught faithfully the truths which had been entrusted to his charge : yet if he had been aware that he had wilfully adopted such a mode of propagating them, as would have proved subversive of established order, and domestic peace ; then, though in one sense of the word he might have pleaded that his Conscience was void of offence towards God, he never could have urged, with equal propriety at least, that it was void of offence toward men.

It seems then to be evident, that the duties which are required from us, and the manner in which those duties are to be fulfilled, form two distinct considerations. It seems also to be evident, that it is only when in our conduct we are blameless in both of these respects, that we are at liberty to plead the testimony of a Conscience void of offence.

In confirmation of the justness of this distinction, we would observe, that the same Apostle hardly ever makes mention of the duty, without connecting it with such circumstances as mark the manner, in which the duty was to be performed. Thus he repeatedly insists on the necessity of forbearing some things for Conscience' sake ; *Conscience, I say, not*

not thine own, but of the others^b. Thus he declares, that he who performs an action, though it be indifferent in itself, yet if it prove a cause of offence to others, will be found to *have sinned against Christ*^c. And thus he avows it to be his glory, that while he handled not the word of God deceitfully, he nevertheless commended himself *to every man's Conscience*^d.

Since then we are to recognise in a pure Conscience these two points; First, obedience to the commands of God; and, Secondly, regard for the laws, and the feelings of men: since too the Apostles themselves scrupulously in every instance respected these two principles, even at the first preaching of Christianity, it cannot surely be thought presumption in us, if we apply their example to condemn the conduct which Enthusiasts pursue.

For these, having adopted some speculative notions, of the truth of which they have no other proof than that which their own heated imaginations supply, make it immediately a matter of Conscience to disseminate those notions at every possible hazard. And so entirely do they resign themselves to their own feelings, that they hardly seem desirous of

^b 1 Cor. x. 29.

^c 1 Cor. viii. 12.

^d 2 Cor. iv. 2.

ascertaining whether the opinions which they would propagate, are well founded or not. Nay, they do not even consult whether the diffusion of what they affirm to be the truth, might not be effected by means less likely to give offence, than those which they resolve to follow. Therefore in a harsh and invidious manner they insist, that, in order to satisfy their own Consciences, every consideration of relative and social duty must be superseded; thus evidently overlooking one of the essential characteristics by which, as we have just established, a good Conscience is to be distinguished. A conduct such as this does not only prove that they have formed an erroneous, because it is an imperfect, conception of the nature of that law of Conscience, by which they would regulate their actions; but it also shews, that they are altogether ignorant of the principle itself, on which that law is founded.

For their opinion seems to be this; That Conscience is a peculiar and an innate principle; an instinctive operation of the soul; whereby, in a manner superior to reason, and unconnected with it, men are enabled to ascertain, that the conduct which they pursue is just, and agreeable to the divine will, from the conviction which they feel that it is so; and

and from the self-approbation which they experience, when they act according to that conviction.

Now if this were spoken of that natural witness in the heart, which the Creator has mercifully implanted there, that his creatures might be able to distinguish between moral rectitude and depravity, their notions could not be condemned. For there is a principle within us, which some have called “ a God “ in our hearts ;” others, “ an Angel or Spirit residing in us ;” others, “ the Voice, and “ the Image of the Almighty^e,” whereby, as by a divine impulse, we are urged to love what is beneficent, or good, or noble ; and to hate what is cruel, mean, or base. In consequence of which it is, that mankind in every country, and in every age, have agreed in approving generally, the native loveliness of Virtue, and in loathing the deformity of Vice^f.

^e See Bp. Taylor's *Ductor Dubitantium*, Book I. c. i. p. 1. where he cites many passages from the early writers, in which they speak of the power and the sacredness of Conscience in the following terms. *Conscientia candor est lucis æternæ, et speculum sine maculâ Dei Majestatis ; et Imago bonitatis illius. St. Bernard.* Tatian declares, *μονον ειναι συνειδησιν Θεου.* And others call Conscience *εν οικος Θεος—ἐπιτροπος δαιμων.* “ But “ these high and great expressions,” he adds, “ are better in the “ spirit than in the letter.”

^f See a Discourse on Conscience, by Archbishop Sharpe,

A little reflection however will be sufficient to prove, that we should but deceive ourselves, were we to suppose that Conscience is so absolutely in every case a divine monitor, (even when moral actions only are concerned) as to be perfect in itself, and independent of external circumstances. Much more should we deceive ourselves, were we to imagine, that, in this meaning of the word, Conscience can be applied to those objects in which the bounds of good and evil are defined by positive institutions; and consequently, not being dependent upon the moral law, cannot properly become objects of the moral sense.

The latter of these two points shall be considered hereafter more at large. With respect to the former of them, we would observe, that if Conscience were simply a divine communication, then would its dictates be of necessity conformable at all times to Revelation; since divine communications must be consistent with themselves. But so far is this from being the case, that many find in the suggestions of their Conscience, the very motive that induces them to act in opposition to those laws, which God himself has ordained.

Again ; were Conscience an innate principle, in that sense for which some would contend, then it must be in all nations, and at all periods, the same. Whereas we find it differ so widely, that the very conduct which it approves in one place as virtuous, in another it condemns as vicious.

Or, finally, were it an instinctive operation of the soul, absolute in itself, and independent of external circumstances, whence could it happen (as every person surely cannot but acknowledge it to happen) that it changes with the progress of our reason ? So that there are many actions which we refuse to perform in our maturer age, from a sense of their criminality, which, at an early period of our lives, we scrupled not to commit without the smallest suspicion of their guilt.

These inconsistencies (and many other similar, were it necessary, might be adduced) are sufficient to prove, that Conscience, when it is made the principle which regulates our conduct, must not be understood in that very indefinite sense which many have incautiously assigned to it. And this is a truth of such importance, that there is hardly any other which ought to be impressed upon the mind more early and more forcibly ; since evidently it

is to the want of a due apprehension of it, that the daring and unrestrained licence of Enthusiasts is to be, in great measure, attributed. For, giving to their feelings the sacred name of Conscience, and persuading themselves that this Conscience is a divine, and therefore an infallible guide, they first conceive themselves to be justified in supporting their peculiar opinions, of the truth of which they are fully indeed, though unreasonably, persuaded; and then they even convince themselves, that to promote the diffusion of those opinions, every expedient which they shall feel themselves inclined to practise, however violent, or however nefarious, may be conscientiously, and therefore innocently, employed.

From what has been said then it is apparent, that the notion, which persons of an enthusiastic turn of mind will most commonly be disposed to entertain, concerning the principle itself whereon Conscience is founded, is altogether erroneous. We will now endeavour to point out what may be considered to be its proper source and original.

Nor will this perhaps be difficult, if we consider, that the idea, which the word itself
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was designed to convey, denotes simply the operation of the mind ^g. An operation certainly the highest, and the most refined, which the human faculties can exercise. Still however it is a voluntary act of the mind, by means of which every part of human conduct is either by anticipation prejudged, or by reflection pronounced to be the fulfilling, or the breach of some positive, or natural law. Whence it follows, that Conscience depends ultimately upon knowledge; which knowledge, it were needless here to argue, is to be obtained, not intuitively, but by means of much previous labour; and results from many united attainments. Therefore (sincerity of heart and soundness of judgment being always presupposed) in whatever proportion our knowledge be either correct, or vague; contracted, or enlarged; neglected, or improved; exactly in the same proportion will the decision of our Conscience be either inaccurate or just, hurtful or innocent.

Ceasing therefore to consider Conscience as

^g “ Conscience, according to the very notation of the word, imports a double or joint knowledge; to wit, one of a divine law or rule; and the other a man’s own action; and so is properly, the application of a general law to a particular instance of practice.” *South’s Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 446. See *Sanderfon’s Prelections*, by Lewis, vol. ii. p. 4.

a distinct principle, (which if it were, knowledge and reason, and every faculty of the mind, would have no part in judging of the quality of our actions,) we are to view it purely as a deliberate act of the understanding comprehending the co-operation of the Will, the Memory, and the Judgment ^h. So that no one can, properly speaking, be said to have received the testimony of a good Conscience, unless his mind, in each of the above-mentioned operations, shall have fully approved the action which he either proposes to do, or has actually performed.

That the nature of this threefold operation of the mind may be rendered manifest to all, let it be supposed that we were called upon to review some one particular action of our lives, the strict honesty of which, we will say that we have had occasion to suspect. If our Will be not sincere in wishing to ascertain scrupulously the precise quality of that action, then it will clearly be of no avail to us that our understanding has been previously enlightened by a knowledge of the law of justice; or that our Memory should make that knowledge accurately present to our Judgment, since, owing to the perversion of

^h Ductor Dubitantium, Book I. c. i. rule 1. sect. 2. et seq.

the Will, the decision of our Conscience could hardly fail of being corrupt.

Or again, supposing that our Will were sincere, and that our understanding were perfect, if, through inattention or defect, the Memory should not recall to the mind those principles of equity which we had previously learned, in this case the decision could not but be inaccurate.

Or, finally, should both the Will and the Memory co-operate with the utmost fidelity, still if the knowledge of the law of right and wrong be imperfect, then, though the decision of our mind should be unexceptionable, as far as the premises it had obtained could carry it, the conclusion would nevertheless be defective, with regard to the real quality and nature of our actionⁱ.

These observations will be sufficient briefly to point out the principles on which the decisions of Conscience are founded. And these being ascertained, we now shall be able to determine (which was the last point we proposed to examine) whether the Enthusiast be justified, all the peculiar circumstances of his case considered, in making the plea of Conscience the motive of his conduct. If he be

ⁱ Ductor Dubitantium, Book I. c. i. rules 3. and 4.

not justified in so doing, then it cannot but be evident, that though we urge this as a reason why he ought to desist from acting on that motive, nevertheless we do in no shape infringe that liberty of Conscience, the free and proper exercise of which, in all religious concerns, is justly esteemed so sacred.

Now, though, in the common forms of speech, the term, Liberty of Conscience, be used in many vague and different acceptations, it cannot be allowed to bear, strictly speaking, more than the two following significations. First, It will either mean the right of freely enquiring into the nature of religious truth, in order to obtain those just opinions which are necessary towards the right formation of the Conscience : or, Secondly, it must imply the liberty of acting without restraint, according to those persuasions which the Conscience shall approve. Such are the two only significations, which the term can with propriety be allowed to bear. And whether we employ it in the latter, or in the former sense, much care is to be taken that we do not use it, so as to afford any room for error, or perversion.

In the former of these two cases indeed, it might be said that no restraint ought to be imposed ; for we are even commanded by
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the Scriptures, to *prove all things*. But as this precept presupposes an intention of *holding fast that which is good*^k, it is evident that Liberty of Conscience, even in its first signification, must be subject to certain restraints. Some regard is always to be paid to the understanding, which, if it be naturally defective, will be unable to pursue or to retain such truths as are not of themselves immediately obvious; and still more regard is due to the purity of the intention.

For, if we were led to enquire into points of Religion solely by a love of speculation, and not by the desire of attaining to such opinions as may serve for the right regulation of our conduct; it is manifest, that, in this instance, to claim an unbounded Liberty of Conscience, would be only to abuse it.

In like manner were we to claim it, when our minds are warped by aversion, or desire, or are infatuated by delusion; the consequences can not but be dangerous, both to ourselves and to others; since our enquiry would not then be directed so much to the attainment of pure and simple truth, as to the discovery of such arguments as might appear to confirm those particular opinions which we had

^k 1 Theff. v. 21.

already adopted; or might invalidate the objections which had been urged against them.

So also, to instance no other case, were we to exercise this liberty while our reason is under the dominion of Enthusiastic delusion; how obvious is it that we might be led to abuse it! For if our enquiry were not undertaken solely with the intention of ascertaining whether those opinions are just, which we feel ourselves disposed to adopt, by comparing them with the unerring and unvarying standard of Revealed Truth; we probably should pervert the sacred words of Scripture from their real meaning, in order to countenance the wild conceits of our heated imaginations.

It is true that in these, and in all similar cases, whether men are misled by ignorance, or by wilfulness, it is not possible that any human restraint should be interposed. Neither, if it could, would it ever be permitted. But thus far is evident, that the very nature of Conscience requires, if we propose to keep it void of offence, that in all religious investigation we should examine ourselves both as to our abilities and our intentions, before we demand the sacred, but dangerous privilege of its free and unbounded exercise. For evidently, as we have just shewn, when the understanding

derstanding is incompetent, or when the will is perverted, the probability will always be, that we shall deviate, in some manner, more or less hurtful as circumstances shall direct, from the one perfect standard of revealed truth. And thus we perceive why it is necessary that all Enthusiasts and Sectaries should of themselves impose some restraint on that liberty of Conscience, by which they claim a right, so absolute and uncontrouled, to investigate the nature, and the obligations of religious truth.

We come now to consider Liberty of Conscience in the second meaning of the term.

And here it might appear that we were about to enter on a subject more extensive than suits the limits of our discourse. For when liberty of Conscience is argued for, as giving all men a right to act without any restriction, according to those notions which in their own minds they shall approve ; and when in consequence it is asserted, that they not only have a privilege to regulate their conduct according to what they believe to be right, but that they are bound by religious principles to do so ; the question becomes one of the most important perhaps, and certainly the most intricate, that can engage the human

human attention ; and that for the following reasons.

Notwithstanding that it be admitted that the Almighty has granted to his creatures perfect freedom of will ; and, notwithstanding that in consequence for any human being to infringe this freedom, must be highly presumptuous and offensive : yet it should be remembered, that there exists one common standard, by which the value of all our actions must be determined : those being the best which shall approach the nearest to it, and those the worst which shall be found to have departed the furthest from it. Since then this is manifest, and since it is an obligation incumbent upon all men, to render their actions as perfect as possible ; it seems to follow, that there is an absolute obligation laid on all men, by which they are bound themselves to approach, and to assist one another in approaching, as near as possible, to this one common standard of perfection¹.

“ If all men were governed by the same laws, and had
 “ the same interest, and the same degrees of understanding,
 “ they would perceive, that all Consciences are to walk by the
 “ same rule ; and that that which is just to one, is so to all, in the
 “ like circumstances. But men are infinitely differenced by
 “ their own acts and relations ; by their understandings and pro-
 “ per economy ; by their superinduced differences and orders ;
 “ by interest and mistake ; by ignorance and malice ; by sects,
 “ and

And this is the very point at which all the difficulties of the question commence. For it will be readily granted on the one hand, that Liberty of Conscience is always to be respected. But then it must be acknowledged on the other, that both Civil government and religion will sustain a material injury, whenever the improper exercise of that liberty shall lead men wilfully to deviate from the known positive rule of right. It becomes a question therefore ; Whether it be not a breach of religious duty to remain unconcerned when we see our fellow-creatures sacrifice their own better hopes, and injure the happiness of others, by an abuse of their Christian liberty. Should it be decided that such an unconcern is a breach of religious duty, then a second question arises ; Whether we are authorized in employing any restraint, that may bring them back to that standard, as well of religious faith, as of obedience, which they have abandoned : and if we are,

“ and deceptions. But this variety is not directly of God’s
 “ making, but of man’s. God commands us to walk by the same
 “ rule, and to this end, *το αὐτο φρονειν*, to be of the same mind :
 “ and this is *ακριβεια συνειδησεως*, the exactness of our Conscience ;
 “ which precept were impossible to be observed, if there were
 “ not one rule, and this rule also very easy.” *Bp. Tayler’s Doctor*
Dubitan. Book I. chap. i. rule 5.

then it remains to be enquired what that restraint may be, and how far it ought to extend.

But with these difficulties, and with many others of a similar nature, our present enquiry is by no means concerned. For be it asked, what are the exact points which we would endeavour to ascertain? Are they not simply these?

First, Whether the Enthusiast, having persuaded himself of the reality of a divine commission, by the wilful effort of a perverted imagination, can afterwards be permitted to urge Liberty of Conscience as a justification, not merely of his own belief in those erroneous opinions, which through the strength of his delusion he adopts, but also of his teaching them to others in a manner subversive of all established order.

Secondly, Whether the freedom of private judgment is in the least infringed by those who would maintain, that the members of the Christian Church are under an absolute obligation to preserve inviolate, both the unity of the faith, and the succession of the Apostolic Ministry.

Thirdly, Whether the plea of Conscience can in any shape apply to the present question; that is, Whether it can authorize a person to enter into a new Communion
founded

founded without any just warrant from Revelation ; or having entered into it, to remain a member of it, after it shall have once been proved to him, that the author of that communion was an Enthusiast ? Or, to state the question more at large ; Whether we can with a safe Conscience follow those teachers as guides in our spiritual concerns, who shall have been proved to us, upon certain evidence, to have been incapable of discriminating the gracious illuminations of the Holy Spirit, from the suggestions of a deluded imagination ?

These being then the precise and the only points with which we are concerned, let us now ascertain whether the several particulars, which have been established in the course of this enquiry, will not enable us to form a proper judgment respecting each.

In the first place then, though the Enthusiast should feel that his Conscience fully approves that conviction which he entertains of having received a divine commission ; nevertheless, this testimony cannot be admitted as a proof, either that his pretensions are well founded, or that the evidence in their favour is such as justifies him in believing them to be so. For it has been shewn that Conscience, accurately speaking, is a deliberative act of the mind, forming certain decisions upon

certain fixed principles of knowledge. It has been shewn likewise that this knowledge is to be drawn not from any peculiar ideas of our own, but from the one pure source of all truth, the Revelations of God. Whence we argue, that when there is no natural inability, which shall prevent the mind from forming a just decision, (for in that case doubtless the question cannot be defended) every rational being has it in his power so to form his Conscience, as to convince him of error. It may not be competent indeed to discover to him all the nice and subtle distinctions of right and wrong ; but it must be competent to distinguish between revealed truth, and voluntary delusion.

But yet further. Whenever it can be proved, as has been done in the case of the Enthusiast, that the will, in its eagerness to admit certain pretensions, shall deliberately overpower and prevent the due exercise of reason ; if the mind in consequence become incapable of perceiving even the grossest contradictions, is it possible that any one can allow that the decisions of a Conscience thus formed will justify us in the profession of erroneous doctrines ? This were a concession, which every principle of reason and of religion would forbid us to make. And in confirmation

firmation of this, we would remark, that were the Enthusiast ignorant of the danger, or even of the power of spiritual delusion, then he might with some propriety urge the plea of Conscience. But it is evident that he is fully acquainted with the tendency of Enthusiasm, and that he knows the nature of its operations. For he disclaims it in the strongest manner himself; he disapproves of it in other people; and he exposes its mischievous consequences by arguments, which, if he would admit them to have in his own case the same weight, which he gives to them in the case of others, could not fail of producing in him a conviction of his error.

In whatever point of view therefore his plea be regarded, we are brought again and again to the same conclusion; so that, following the plain dictates of unimpassioned reason, we cannot but infer, that the Enthusiast is not justified in pleading the approbation of Conscience, as a principle which makes him blameless in believing and propagating his opinions, however erroneous those opinions may be.

With respect to the second question; namely, Whether the freedom of private judgment be infringed by those who urge the necessity of a strict adherence to established or-

dinances ; we begin by observing, that there is no one principle, the truth of which is so universally acknowledged, as the necessity of conforming, in all things, to some one given standard, for the attainment of perfection.

In what manner this position is confirmed by the testimony, as it were, of the universe itself, in which the perfection of the whole arises from the exact obedience that each particular part pays to the law, by which it is to be governed, we need not here insist^m. It

^m See Hooker's Eccles. Polity, book i. sec. 2. Having shewn how all things in nature adhere to the strict keeping of one tenure, statute, and law, he concludes with this striking observation. " Now, if Nature should intermit her course, and
" leave altogether, though it were but for a while, the observa-
" tion of her own laws ; if those principal and mother-elements
" of the world, whereof all things in this lower world are made,
" should lose the qualities which now they have ; if the frame
" of that heavenly arch, erected over our heads, should loosen
" and dissolve itself ; if celestial spheres should forget their
" wonted motions, and by irregular volubility turn themselves
" any way as it might happen ; if the prince of the lights of
" heaven, which now, as a giant, doth run his unwearied course,
" should, as it were through a languishing faintness, begin to
" stand and rest himself ; if the moon should wander from her
" beaten way, the times and seasons of the year blend themselves,
" by disorder and confused mixture, the clouds yield no rain,
" the earth be defeated of heavenly influence, the fruits of the
" earth pine away, as children at the breasts of their mother,
" no longer able to yield them relief ; what would become of
" man himself, whom these things do now all serve ? See we
" not

will be sufficient to observe, that mankind in fact direct themselves in all their pursuits, by that very principle for which we contend.

For when they aim at the attainment of any excellence, whether it be in arts, in sciences, or in government; their first object is to discover something that may be considered to be a standard, whereby, in each particular pursuit, the excellence which is sought after shall be defined. And when this standard is once discovered, they then acknowledge, that it is only by conforming to it, that they afterwards can obtain the end proposed. Whence we infer, that the argument, which is to be drawn from this analogy, might be sufficient of itself to establish the point under consideration. But the testimony of Scripture will be judged more conclusive. Let that decide. For thus saith the Lord: *Stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls* ⁿ.

Therefore, although opposition has at all times been made to such enquiries, as would

“ not plainly, that obedience of creatures unto the law of Nature is the stay of the whole world?”

ⁿ Jeremiah. vi. 16. Compare this verse with what our blessed Lord said of himself: “ I am the way, and the truth, and the life.”—“ Come unto me, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.” John xiv. 6. and Matt. xi. 28, 29.

tend to establish the propriety, and would determine the means of obtaining religious uniformity; we nevertheless maintain, that the words of him who so solemnly bids us enquire for the *old ways*; his consequent command to *walk therein*; and the motive which he finally suggests, *that our souls may find peace*; are considerations which prove incontestably the necessity of referring all our religious opinions to one standard. Nor indeed, if the question were attentively considered, could it be possible that Conscience should ever be made the plea for deviating from it. For we have already shewn that Conscience is no distinct faculty or principle of the mind. “It rather
“is the mind itself, applying the general rule
“of God’s law to particular cases and ac-
“tions.” Therefore the Almighty having once commanded us to enquire after that one given standard, to which we are bound in all religious concerns to adhere; and that command remaining in force, how can Conscience, truly and properly speaking, suggest that such an enquiry infringes its liberty? For Conscience, when duly formed, can never approve or condemn, but accordingly as the law of God has previously commanded, or forbidden °.

° See South’s Sermons, vol. ii. p. 449.

But yet further. We should form a very imperfect conception of any of God's commandments, which are declared by the Psalmist to be *exceeding broad*^p, were we to suppose that their full meaning and import is limited to the specific thing enjoined. We ought rather to consider, that it is by means of them, that the Almighty instructs us in the great truths upon which religion is founded, and by which perfection is to be attained. When therefore He bids us preserve the unity of his Church, may we not infer that this command was given, not merely to exercise our obedience, but to teach us, that as that invisible kingdom in the heavens, to which in hope we all aspire, exhibits the beauty of perfect order, as well as of perfect holiness; so, to prepare ourselves to enter therein, we must previously have disposed our minds to admire and to preserve that beauty of order, which was established by the blessed Jesus in his Church^q; *casting down*

^p Psalm cxix. 96.

^q It is related of Mr. Hooker, that in his last sickness, a short time before his death, he was observed to fall into a deep contemplation. Being asked what was the subject of his meditation, he replied, "that he was meditating the number and nature of Angels, and their blessed obedience and order, without which, Peace could not be in Heaven: and Oh! he
" exclaimed,

*imaginations, and every high thing that exalleth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ*¹.

In fact, the laws on which all establishments, of whatever kind they may be, are founded, are in their very nature so far from being merely imperative, that they are really didactic. They not only prescribe obedience, but they teach duty. For every precept that may be considered to be justly deserving the name of law, is declaratory of that knowledge of right and wrong, of good and evil, which the legislator himself possesses. So that when we obey his institutions, we must view ourselves as regulating our conduct in each particular case, according to those ideas of moral excellence and virtue, which that legislator himself entertained. Which reflection, if it have an effect upon our conduct, as surely it must, when we consider even the comparative prudence, and wisdom, and integrity, of human lawgivers; how ought it to weigh with us, when we consider that Lawgiver who is above all in the heavens! For if we should find much security and consolation in remem-

“exclaimed, that it might be so on earth!” See Life of Hooker, by I. Walton, prefixed to his Works, vol. i. p. 90.

¹ 2 Cor. x. 5.

bering, that when we obey human laws, we form our lives according to those rules of virtue, which good and wise men believed to be the best ; what unbounded security and consolation shall we feel, when we reflect that, in obeying divine laws, we form our lives according to those rules which are approved by Him, whose knowledge of good and evil is, like all his other attributes, absolute, unerring, perfect^s !

Since then the Almighty, in commanding us to enquire after the path, in which alone we are to walk, has clearly intimated to us, that in His all-perfect mind such an enquiry is good ; in what manner can it be said, that liberty of Conscience is infringed by those, who urge the necessity of restraining every vain conceit, which would lead men to wander from it ?

It now remains for us to consider the third and last question ; Whether liberty of

^s The excellent Hooker suggests another reason why laws should be respected, which is well worthy attention. “ Although we perceive not,” he says, “ the goodness of laws made, nevertheless, sith things in themselves may have that which we peradventure discern not ; should not this breed a fear into our hearts how we speak or judge in the worst part concerning that, the unadvised disgrace whereof may be no mean dishonour to him, towards whom we profess all submission and love.” Eccl. Polit. Works, vol. i. p. 283.

Conscience can be admitted as a sufficient plea to justify the conduct of those, who wilfully adopt the systems formed by Enthusiasts, and persevere in adhering to them?

And here we would begin by observing, that they who use this argument hardly seem to attend to the very meaning of the terms which they employ. When liberty of Conscience is contended for, in order to justify our adherence to any particular opinions, it is always pre-supposed, that those opinions are either founded on our own rational, and serious, and duly-acquired convictions; or else, that they are communicated to us by some person, whose integrity and means of information are such, as render it improbable that he himself should be deceived, as to the truth of those doctrines which he teaches; or that, knowing them to be erroneous, he should wilfully recommend them to others.

Let us then observe in what manner this rule applies to the followers of the Enthusiast. The very circumstance of his being an Enthusiast must prove, at least, that he is a person incapable of ascertaining whether the doctrines he teaches be true or false. And as it may easily be shewn, that the divine mission which he claims is mere delusion, how can it be admitted, that the belief which
any

any one shall say that he entertains of the reality of that mission, is founded on a rational, a serious, and a duly-acquired conviction?

But obvious as may be the conclusion which this very statement of the case supplies; still there never have been wanting those, who affirm, that it was the conviction of their Conscience solely, which first led them to embrace the tenets of that particular Enthusiast, whose communion they have entered into; urging the same plea as their motive for defending and adhering to them.

Surely they who argue thus can hardly be aware how much their conduct is in opposition to reason. If a person actually disordered in his mind were to endeavour to teach them some new religious opinions, they themselves would not hesitate to pronounce, that his opinions could not be with propriety adopted. They would allow him indeed to believe scrupulously that what he advanced was true. But they would say, that his understanding being incapable of forming proper apprehensions on the subject, their Conscience, instead of leading them to embrace, would determine them to reject the doctrines which should thus be offered to them.

If then it can be proved that the proper

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exercise of the understanding has been prevented in the one instance by means of Enthusiasm, full as much as in the other, through natural infirmity ; and if in either case it be apparent, that the doctrines which are taught are erroneous ; we must maintain, that, consistently with reason, no one can urge the plea of Conscience as the motive that leads him to embrace the opinions of the one, while he confesses that the same Conscience leads him to reject those of the other.

After all however it may be suggested, that too much stress ought not to be laid on this argument. For it is urged by the advocates of Schism, that the apprehensions of men are various, and that those proofs which to the mind of one shall be found to be satisfactory, to another shall seem to be inconclusive.

Whither is it designed that this reasoning should lead us ? Is it meant thereby to insinuate that every one who supports the system, and adopts the doctrine of the Enthusiast, does it for Conscience sake ? To establish this, it must be proved, that each individual has seriously and dispassionately examined, in every minutest particular, the pretensions of that new teacher whom he follows ; and this too with a will perfectly unbiassed, and with an understanding fully competent to the undertaking.

dertaking. Having done this, if he shall truly affirm, that the pretensions advanced appear to him to be well founded; that the illuminations claimed are, in his opinion, as truly from above, as those which were vouchsafed to the Apostles; and that the tenets taught are perfectly consonant with Revelation; then, I say, but not till then, may he plead, with some colour of propriety, that Conscience is the principle which regulates his conduct.

Whether, after all, a person thus following the dictates of his Conscience, and adopting an erroneous conduct, shall be absolved from all responsibility as to the consequences which may follow; is a question which no human enquiry can decide. It is sufficient for our present purpose to have established in the former part of these Lectures^t, that there are some certain marks, by which the pretensions of every Enthusiast may be proved to be delusory. And as we have shewn also, that these marks are to be ascertained, not by abstracted reasoning, but by reference to the Scriptures, which afford all men alike the unerring criterion whereby spiritual delusion may in every instance be detected; it seems hardly

^t See page 217. et seq.

possible that the case above proposed should ever occur. That some few individuals may be deceived by the fervour of their imagination, or by the weakness of their judgment, will readily be granted. But that there should be whole congregations, all equally incapable of admitting the simplest deductions of reason; that there should be thousands and tens of thousands, whose minds, competent to decide with accuracy on every other question, should on this alone be unable to discriminate between Truth and Error, when they are brought as it were parallel to each other; this must ever appear improbable to the serious, and the dispassionate.

But perhaps it will be argued, that were this last inference admitted to be just, the subject would still be involved in difficulty: since there exists, it will be said, no motive but Conscience, which can be supposed strong enough to induce the Sectary to adopt the conduct which he pursues.

I would that this were so: but experience has taught us otherwise. What! are we to forget, that in the immense body of Society, there are many who are inconsiderately fond of novelty; many, who love speculative opinions; many, who delight in change; many, who are impatient of all restraint; many,
who

who love not to submit to regular government; many, who contemn the venerable name of the Episcopal Church; and but too many, who have conceived an implacable hatred against the sacred institution of a regular Hierarchy. Will not each of these separately find in his peculiar opinions, motives strong enough to engage him in Schism? And will they not all readily unite with the Enthusiast? Some of them because his wild and visionary tenets soothe their fanciful dispositions; and others because his unsettled practices will promote their cooler purposes of deliberate innovation.

I am aware indeed that there is an obstacle, which will at all times prevent us from bringing to any definite conclusion the arguments which may be urged on this head. For the proof, after all, remains concealed in the breast of each individual. So that however well-founded every conjecture may appear; and however just the inference of each argument may be; nevertheless, nothing can be with certainty determined, unless all Separatists shall be sincere in avowing the real motives which influence their conduct. If therefore, whether from wilfulness or from ignorance, those motives are withholden, it cannot but follow, that we never shall be able to

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enforce

enforce our reasoning so strictly, but that the weak may still pervert that liberty of Conscience which they claim, so as to impose upon themselves; and that the artful may abuse it, to impose on others^u.

Liberty of Conscience then, though it be a point of such momentous concern to society in general, and to individuals in particular; though it affect us not only in relation to our existence here, but even to our existence hereafter; and that too in a state either of eternal happiness, or of eternal misery; must nevertheless remain as it were a sacred deposit, en-

^u “ Nothing is more usual, than to pretend Conscience to
 “ all the actions of men which are public, and whose nature
 “ cannot be concealed. If arms be taken up in a violent war,
 “ enquire of both sides why they engage on that side respec-
 “ tively? they answer, because of their Conscience. Ask a
 “ Schismatic why he refuse to join in the Communion of the
 “ Church? he tells you it is against his Conscience. Every
 “ man’s way seems right in his own eyes; and what they think
 “ is not against Conscience, they think, or pretend to think, is
 “ an effect of Conscience: and so their fond persuasions and
 “ fancies are made sacred, and Conscience is pretended, and
 “ themselves, and every man else is abused. But in these cases,
 “ and the like, men have found a sweetness in it to serve their
 “ ends upon Religion; and because Conscience is the Religious
 “ Understanding, or, the mind of a man as it stands dressed in
 “ and for Religion, they think that some sacredness or autho-
 “ rity passes upon their passion or design, if they call it Con-
 “ science.” *Bishop Taylor’s Ductor Dubitantium*, Book I. c. i.
 rule 3.

trusted

trusted to the personal integrity of each individual. All that can be done in the present case is to represent to each, that if Civil Society so respect the peace of their Conscience, as that, even when circumstances might seem to justify some restraint, none is imposed; it then becomes a reciprocal duty on their part, to respect the peace of society. For the community at large has a just and a sacred claim upon every one of us, that we never exercise our liberty of Conscience either wilfully or capriciously, to the detriment of the public good.

With this reflection then we terminate that important enquiry, which with much imperfection indeed, but we trust *with a Conscience void of offence toward God and toward men*, has been attempted in the present Lectures.

That the question which we undertook to consider branches out into many particulars of high importance, some of which have been treated incidentally, but not fully; whilst others have been altogether passed over in silence, cannot have escaped observation^y.

^y Of these omissions, the most material perhaps may appear to have been this, the having forborne to enter into a minute examination of the peculiar opinions which were maintained by Mr. Wesley, and Mr. Whitefield, respectively. The reason for

And lest this omission should be considered as improper, we must recall the mind to the precise point, which alone, from the first, we intended to examine.

We began then by stating, that there was no spirit which had proved more injurious to Christianity than that of Enthusiasm^x. And having tried it by those rules which Scripture for this very purpose has afforded us, we found that, instead of being a *spirit, pure, peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy, and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy*^y, coming as it claimed to

this omission has been already assigned briefly, p. 225. Could it have been proved that those new teachers had received, as they pretended, a divine commission to teach the doctrines which they propagated; then, however contrary these might have been to the opinions which we had previously entertained, the authority of a divine commission would have outweighed every other consideration, and the doctrines would have been received with humility. But having once proved that the teachers themselves were Enthusiasts, the examination of their peculiar tenets became unnecessary. For it seemed to be improbable that any person who should acknowledge the reality of their delusion, would, nevertheless, persist in adopting their doctrines. Of course it will be understood, that the doctrines here alluded to are such only, as are either disclaimed by the Church of England altogether; or such as are not acknowledged by it, in the peculiar modifications given them by Mr. Welley and Mr. Whitefield.

^x Page 5.

^y James iii. 17.

do, from God; it was a spirit of delusion excited in the mind, either by the artifices of our great spiritual enemy^z; or, as we were more willing to believe, by the influence of carnal passions, and the force of a perverted imagination^a. These premises being established, we then argued from them, that to make impressions of such a nature a rule of conduct, directing us wilfully to separate, in consequence, from the Communion of an Apostolical Church; to form new ministries; to teach novel opinions; and thus excite those religious dissensions, the unavoidable tendency of which would be to destroy the peace of society^b, and to corrupt the purity of the faith^c; was to pursue a conduct, which could be justified on no principle either of reason, or of religion. For reason, we argued, binds every being who is possessed of it, to regulate his conduct by those rules alone, which the free exercise of his faculties shall have convinced him are the best: and religion exacts from all, an uniform obedience to the positive commands of God.

This was the scope of our argument. And as the conclusion, to which we directed our

^z Page 17.

^b See Lect. VII.

^a Page 36.

^c See Lect. VI.

enquiry, rested on these several points which have been enumerated, and on them only, it was judged unnecessary to take any other into consideration. If afterwards we enquired into the nature and the obligations of Conscience, this was done ; First, in order to prevent any mistaken notions concerning the free exercise of that sacred principle from affecting improperly the several conclusions which we had obtained ; and, Secondly, to strengthen the application which we proposed to make of them, for the conviction of such as have embraced the delusive systems of Enthusiasts.

For we have been led, in consequence, to ascertain, that the plea of Conscience cannot, with any propriety, be urged by those who either wilfully receive the doctrines of Enthusiasts ; or who, becoming members of their Communions, shall afterwards defend them, and endeavour to advance their interests. Since as it has been shewn that Conscience (in that sense of the word in which alone it applies to the subject under consideration) is formed, not on the capriciousness of feeling, but on a just apprehension of positive revealed truth^d ; it seems to be morally impossible, that the

^d Page 453. et seq.

mind in a solemn and deliberative manner should ever decide, that a person is qualified to be a guide in religious concerns, who shall be manifestly misled himself by Enthusiastic delusion : that it should ever acknowledge, that a Communion which is established upon no good authority is entitled to the same degree of veneration with a Church which *is built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets*^f : or that it should ever allow that those doctrines ought to be professed, which are inconsistent with the Scriptures.

And here, when we reflect how obvious these conclusions are, and yet remember the difficulty with which they have been obtained, owing principally to those obstacles which always are raised to enquiries of this nature, by the perversity of the human will : when likewise we consider that the inveteracy of habit, or the force of prejudice, will frequently prevent the mind from admitting conviction : and when, finally, we advert to the circumstances which first occasioned, and which it is to be feared will make such unpleasant investigations as the present, for ever necessary ; sorrow and dejection cannot but

^f Ephesians ii. 20.

oppress the minds of the serious, and the devout.

For these things, may the afflicted Church well say, I weep; for these things, may she exclaim, in the mournful language of the Prophet, mine eye runneth down with water: since the comforters that should have relieved, are far from me^g; I am desolated by my children, and the enemy hath prevailed.

And is it not an humiliating circumstance to reflect, how short a time the spirit of peace rested with the Christian Church? how soon the bond of its unity was broken? And whence did this proceed? Was it from any fault in the system itself, which our merciful Lord imparted? Far, far, otherwise! *The generations of the Christian Church, like those of the world, were beahful: there was no poison of destruction in them^h; and its course would have been peaceably ordered, had not the same desire to be wise beyond that which is written, and to be great beyond what was permitted, destroyed in this, as in the former instance, the fair creation of the Son of God.*

In like manner is it not an humiliating reflection to think that so many centuries

^g Lamentations i. 16.

^h Wisdom i. 14.

should have elapsed, and that so little should have been attempted to repair the injuries which the cause of Christianity has sustained from the wilfulness of its professors? For not only is it too true that there is no unity in the universal Church; but even each distinct communion is unnaturally at war with itself. The various evils which arise in consequence of these dissensions, who can enumerate? This however it may be feared is one of them: that as it has appeared to be almost impracticable to restore unity to the Church; so those have been prevented from making the attempt, who have enjoyed, under Providence, the probable means of essentially contributing towards it. At all events, this evil has certainly ensued; that they, who, remaining faithful to the great interests of their heavenly Master's cause, labour earnestly to promote the unity of Christian Communion, find, comparatively speaking, few who concur with their endeavours, or even *bid them prosper in the name of the Lord*.

But these discouragements, great as they may be, will be considered by the pious Christian, to be rather trials to exercise his patience, and to approve his faith, than arguments to make him discontinue his exertions. Such at least they were considered to be

be by the faithful servants of God in times past; and such it becomes us more particularly to esteem them in the present day.

For we cannot be ignorant that the Almighty Father hath declared, that when he called this our earthly system into being, he limited the ages of its duration. That those ages are now rapidly advancing towards their awful termination, and that the Creator is preparing, as the Apostle strongly expresses it, to sum up the dread account which exists between his creatures and himselfⁱ; the intimations of prophecy seem clearly to announce. At what hour that awful event shall take place, no one knoweth, *but only the Father which is in Heaven*^k. Thus far however we are permitted to know, that, previous to its final accomplishment, we shall see those long expected promises fulfilled, when *the captive daughter of Zion* shall raise her afflicted *head from the dust*, and shall

ⁱ Romans ix. 28. Our translation is, "For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth." But the words used in the original, λογὸν συντελῶν καὶ συντεμῶν, seem rather to imply an allusion made to the balancing of accounts, a metaphor frequently employed by the prophetic writers of the Old Testament. See Grotius, and Hammond in loc.

^k Mark xiii. 32.

know that he, Jehovah, is her Saviour and Redeemer¹: when the house of the Lord shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it^m; and all the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the seaⁿ.

What instruments the Almighty will employ, in order to effect this gracious purpose, no human foresight can determine. Perhaps, however, it may not be presumptuous to conjecture, that the little zeal which Christian nations have hitherto manifested in promoting the real interests of their Master's kingdom upon earth; and their wilful disobedience, in not adhering to that unity which was once established in the Church, and which we were commanded to preserve in our generations for ever; may determine the Supreme Disposer of all events, to take from us the glory of being the immediate instruments of the great enlargement of Christianity, and to confer it upon others more worthy, and better than ourselves.

In which case it may not seem improbable, but that this eminent glory shall be reserved for that people, who, though we now behold

¹ Isaiah xlix. 26. lii. 2.

^m Isaiah ii. 2.

ⁿ Isaiah xi. 9. Habakkuk ii. 14.

them *meted out, and trodden down, and scattered* over the face of the whole earth, are, nevertheless, *a people terrible from their beginning hitherto*^o; a people, who, though their land be *now spoiled* by the inundation of barbarous conquerors, as by the fury of desolating waters, once chased ten thousand at the rebuke of ten, what time the Lord of Hosts went forth with their armies, and dwelt in majesty among them. He indeed, in his just anger, hath cast them from him for a season. Still however he makes them the object of his paternal regard^p. And when they shall have at last accepted that Salvation, which in the day of their visitation they rejected; then shall be seen as it were a new dawning of Christianity, to the brightness of *whose rising the Gentiles shall come*^q, so that what yet remaineth of the world in darkness shall walk in the light of the Gospel of peace^r.

^o Isaiah xviii. 2.

^p Isaiah xviii. 4.

^q Isaiah lx. 3.

^r It seems probable that the great end which the prophecies in Scripture are designed to answer, is rather to confirm our faith; by reference to events which are passed; than to stimulate our curiosity to pry too minutely into those which are to happen. "I tell you," said our blessed Lord, "before it come, that when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he." *John* xiii. 19. Still however a certain de-

Let it not be thought that these reflections are foreign from our present design.

gree of enquiry is permitted; and I hope that the narrow bounds which are prescribed to it have not been transgressed by the conjecture which has been suggested above. Those who have made the Prophecies the immediate object of their consideration, probably have all experienced that many of the difficulties, with which such a study is attended, arise from a want of properly distinguishing between those predictions, which respect the Jews in their recall from the first captivity, and those which relate to the final re-establishment of that great people in the Holy Land. Something has been attempted on this head, in a little work entitled, "Observations upon the Prophecies relating to the Restoration of the Jews," by J. Eyre. Much however remains yet to be done. See an able Disquisition on the eighteenth Chapter of Isaiah, by the Bishop of Rochester (now St. Asaph). Consider also, among many other prophecies, those of Amos ix. 11. 15. Hosea iii. 4, 5. Isaiah xi. 10. 16. xxxv. 10. xlix. 22. lx. 4. 16. Micah iv. 1. Zechariah ii. 10, 11, 12. These prophecies alone may be sufficient to authorize the belief, that the Jews will be restored to their proper country, and dwell there in a converted state: that their conversion will synchronize with the destruction of the Antichristian powers, (whatever these may be,) perhaps will contribute towards that event; and that immediately consequent upon it will be the flowing in of the Gentiles. That the Lord has indeed begun to shake the heavens preparatory to these awful revolutions, we may humbly be permitted to believe. *But alas! who shall live, when God doeth these things?* Laying aside therefore all conjectures as to the precise period when these events will take place, (conjectures which must be vain, and may be presumptuous) it will be far more profitable to consider, that they will probably be preceded by *tribulations and distresses of nations*, such as never were before experienced. Happy will he be, who shall have previously so considered the
sure

Had it been conceived, that our heavenly Father had intended that the religion of his Son should be made known to but a few of the nations of the earth ; then the fatal consequences of Schism must have been limited in their effect ; and the motive which would incite the Christian minister to endeavour to repress the tide of religious dissension, must in like manner have been limited also. But when it was believed that the Almighty had graciously resolved that Salvation in the name of Christ should be offered to the uttermost parts of the earth ; then, as the contentious spirit of Christian Sectaries was evidently one of the moral causes which retarded, if we may employ the expression, the fulfilling of his blessed will, this consideration naturally suggested a new, and at the same time a powerful motive, for wishing to see peace restored to the universal Church of Christ.

Religious unity therefore being an object of such high importance, it could not but become a cause of deep concern to reflect, how much the numerous Schisms, which distract our own Communion, might contri-

sure words of Prophecy, as to be enabled to preserve in those times of perplexity, whenever they do occur, a firm reliance on the unshaken promises of God. " Nevertheless, when the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth ?" Luke xviii. 8.

bute

bute to obstruct its final re-establishment. As however it was manifest, that the greater part of those unhappy Schisms had originated with Enthusiasts, it was argued, that could it be shewn, that the authority on which they had acted was in direct opposition to Scripture, and was unsanctioned by reason ; then one of the most powerful obstacles which had hitherto prevented the accomplishment of that event, *after which the whole creation groaneth*^s, might be in some measure removed. For an hope was entertained, and this we trust not an unreasonable one, that such as should admit our arguments to be just, might be induced to relinquish those principles which, in future, they could not conscientiously defend.

This however was not the only object which, it was believed, might possibly be effected.

It was reasoned, that should it be proved that integrity of Church Communion was a point of strict religious necessity ; then every Minister of the Church of Christ might be animated to concur with increasing earnestness both to promote and to preserve it. And this on the conviction, that when many individuals shall labour with the same

^s John x. 16.

spirit of Christian charity, in the same design ; each moving like the stars in heaven, harmoniously in his proper orbit ; the Almighty might then be pleased to hasten the coming of that day, *when there shall be but one fold and one shepherd*^t ; and when, as far as the unavoidable frailty of human nature will permit, the Lord God Omnipotent shall reign gloriously upon the earth.

These were the reflections which conspired to suggest the investigation that has been here attempted.

Probably they will suggest likewise the motives which ought to lead, not the Minister only, but all orders of men, to concur in advancing that great object which it was designed to answer. These motives are numerous, are awful, and important : they are to be drawn from every consideration that is connected with happiness, both temporal and eternal ; from whatever is lovely in natural affection, is praise-worthy in social duty, or is pure in religious obedience. But as many of them have been noticed already, they need not to be again enumerated. There is one however, on which I cannot forbear insisting.

Surely a sentiment of becoming pride, and

^t Romans viii. 22

thame, and a sense of what is due to the dignity of human nature, ought to prevent the Christian from destroying the unity of Christian Communion. There are countries, where the form of national worship has been preserved almost inviolate, from the period of its first institution to the present day. In these men have adhered faithfully, through a long series of ages, to rites and ceremonies grievous to be borne; to doctrines, mortifying and austere; and to the regular succession of one appointed Ministry; and this because it was so ordained by the founders of their religion^u. Yet what so powerful claim have the founders of those religions to the obedience of their followers? Did they, like the holy Author of our faith, *quit the Throne of the Majesty on high, and humble themselves even to the*

^u There is nothing perhaps more remarkable in the history of mankind, than the strict observance which the people of Hindostan have always paid to the institutions of their national religion. Their fidelity in this particular is so much the more striking, as many of those institutions exact the severest self-denial, and often a painful and voluntary renunciation of life itself. The account which is preserved incidentally by Arrian, of the manner in which the Indian philosopher Calanus put himself to death, affords a singular proof of the great antiquity of some of those customs which are still practised among the Hindoos, at the present day. See Arrian de Exped. Alexandri, lib. vii.

death upon the Cross ^x, to prove their love to their disciples, and to purchase salvation for them?—They shrink from all comparison. Why then are their institutions to be thus venerated? Why are their precepts to be made an everlasting law to their disciples, while Christians respect not the words of their dying Lord, who prays that they may *be perfect in one* ^y? Surely the nations of the East will rise up in the judgment with us, and condemn us ^z. *The commandment of their Fathers they have obeyed and all their precepts; and have done according unto all that they have commanded them; but we have not inclined our ear unto our God, neither have we hearkened unto him* ^a.

Since then such a conduct as this cannot but make the Christian name a reproach among the Heathen; let us hope that we may yet be heard, when, in the spirit of brotherly love, we once more entreat the Enthusiast to employ those means which are supplied him to detect the fallacy of his pretensions. Passion indeed may obscure his judgment; and inaccurate conceptions concerning the nature of religious duties

^x Philippians ii. 8.

^y John xvii. 23.

^z Matt. xii. 42.

^a Jeremiah xxxv. 14—19.

may dispose him towards delusion. But reason, and the unerring word of Scripture, will at all times enable him, under the gracious influences of the Holy Ghost, to detect the causes, and to trace the issue of his error.

Is it that he is blinded by pride and ambition? Let him consider how rapidly that period is approaching, when all those objects which now appear to him important, will be found so insignificant, that they shall not even obtain a place in the mansions of the blessed.

Is it that he is misled by his zeal to do God service? Alas! what service can man render unto God but obedience? And how can his obedience be made manifest but by his fulfilling the law? His impatient spirit perhaps may depreciate the duties of an humble station, as if the performance of them would not conduct him to that height of glory after which he aspires. But let him remember, that our divine Master received the servant who had been *faithful over two talents* only, with the same title of love and approbation with which he received him who had been faithful over many^b.

Not that we are forbidden to encourage

^b Matt. xxv. 21, 22.

an holy ambition, in aspiring after the brightest portion *in the inheritance of Saints*. The Scriptures themselves, though they teach us to regulate that ambition, lest it fail of its object, do not only encourage it, but point out the mode in which it should be exercised. They assure us that *they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever^c!*

What a powerful, what an exalted motive is here presented, to animate the zeal of the appointed Steward in the household of Christ! How ought it to make him strive to reclaim his brethren from the fatal dominion of vain imaginations!

Wherefore, *O man of God, be patient, be vigilant*: and while thine own conduct, pure in all things, praise-worthy, blameless, shall make the *good way well spoken of*; by every argument that reason, enlightened by Grace to understand the unerring dictates of Revelation, can supply, endeavour to remove from the mind of the Enthusiast, the vail of his delusion. In long suffering forbear; in gentleness exhort; in charity reprove. Shouldest thou thus gain a single soul, which might

^c Daniel xii. 3.

otherwise have perished, *thy reward hereafter shall be great in the heavens*^d.

Here let us conclude. And should any thing have been suggested in the course of this enquiry, which may arrest the attention of the Enthusiast, and the Schismatic, and make them pause, and weigh the awful event, before they presume to rend the Church, *which is the body of Christ*^e:

Should any thing have been proved concerning the tendency of Schism, which may convince the several orders of society that Church Unity is necessary to the well-being of the State, and the happiness of mankind:

And, finally, should any thing have been said, which may incite those who prepare themselves to exercise the sacred functions of the Ministry, towards a fuller investigation of those great principles, an adherence to which alone can maintain the beauty of Holiness in the Church; can alone preserve the purity of that Faith, which they will be commissioned to teach; then, I cannot *but rejoice in the labour of my hand*; reposing with humble confidence on the assurance given us in Scripture,

^d Matt. v. 12. James v. 19, 20.

^e Ephesians i. 23.

that there is no instrument, however weak, which, through the infinite goodness of God, may not sometimes promote (when so it shall please him to grant a blessing) the glory of his name.

And that such a blessing may now be granted, let us ask in the prevailing name of Him, *Who sitteth at the right hand of God; Who beareth the prayer; Who is the head over all things to the Church; even Christ Jesus; Who with the Holy Ghost, in the Unity of the Godhead, is One with the Father, Who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen, nor can see; to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen*^f.

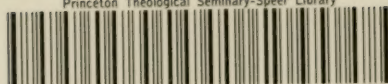
^f 1 Timothy vi. 15, 16.

THE END.





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